

THE BUSINESS, TECHNOLOGY & ART OF ANIMATION

Anniversary
Edition
2007

ANIMATION

MAGAZINE

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Allen Hall*

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Glenn Whipp, LOS ANGELES DAILY NEWS

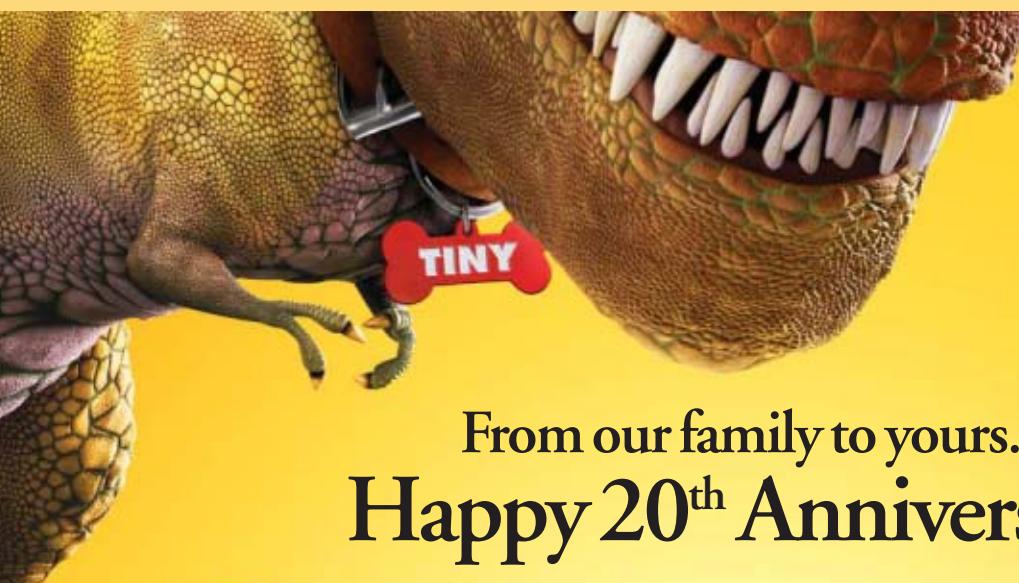
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— DEAD MAN'S CHEST —

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ON 20 YEARS OF
EXCELLENCE





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Volume 21, Issue 1, Number 168, January 2007

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It was 20 years ago today (well, sort of) when this magazine's founder and original publisher Terry Thoren decided to launch a venture that chronicled the exciting and vibrant world of animation. A lot has happened in our toon world since then, so much that we all experience some whiplash as we try to keep up with the dizzying pace of change in the animated milieu.

We have compiled a wonderful "that was then, this is now" kind of a flashback book that will be available in the first quarter of 2007, which will allow you to see how far we have come in the past two decades. So I will not dwell on that subject in this brief letter. However, I would like to say that it has been an honor and absolute pleasure to observe this thriving industry and to follow in the footsteps of this magazine's past editors—Jerry Beck, Sarah Baisley, Rita Street and Bill Desowitz to name a few.

Of course, we couldn't have done it without the support of all of you brilliant and hard-working people who work in the toon business. I am always in awe of your talent, drive and enthusiasm. I can't count the times you have inspired us all with your phone calls, emails and in-person meetings at industry screenings and markets.

By the way, how about this funny piece of trivia to help put everything in perspective (which also makes me feel ancient!): *Monster House* director Gil Kenan was only ten years old when the first issue of *Animation Magazine* went to the printers!

Thanks for keeping us animated for 20 fantastic years.

Ramin Zahed
Editor-in-Chief
rzahed@animationmagazine.net



Over the past two decades we have been blessed by many dedicated and passionate editors who have made this magazine what it is today. All of these individuals are not only talented journalists, but are also animation enthusiasts who love animation and the people who make it, sell it, distribute or exhibit it. Their stewardship and creative energy has brought the world of animation alive for thousands over these years and hopefully furthered the cause of bringing this fabulous medium to the forefront of the entertainment world.

Starting from our early days there was Terry Thoren, our founder who with the help of Jerry Beck, conceived of, laid out and wrote the first magazines. After their passage to other pursuits in the animation world came, Rita Street, Barbra Wexler, Christine Ferriter, Sarah Baisley and of course our current editor-in-chief, the dedicated and wonderful Ramin Zahed. All of these people have continued on to contribute to our industry in many ways. We have fond memories associated with this group and I personally would like to thank them all for their many contributions.

In addition we are indebted to, Leslie Sullivan, Dan Bolton, Bill Buck and currently Jodi Bluth who have served as our publishers, or otherwise known as "Specialists of all tasks" in a small company like ours.

The list of contributors is endless but not any less important to our continued success of publishing against many odds for these 20 years. I would wish to thank them all personally and in print, but do not have the room on this page, so suffice it to say that we remember and appreciate all of you and are grateful for your contributions to this phenomenal business and art form.

Lastly I must express my deepest gratitude to those of you, who through advertising or subscriptions have supported us throughout the years, without you none of this would be possible. Thank you so much!

Jean Thoren
President of Animation Magazine

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Best
Animated
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★★★★★
An animated
wonder."

—Liz Braun, THE TORONTO SUN

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OVER THE HEDGE

The Animation Planner

January

FRAME-BY-FRAME

5 The wait is over! Lionsgate releases Vanguard/BFC's long-anticipated animated feature *Happily N'Ever After* in theaters. The gorefest that is Eli Roth's *Hostel 2* also hits theaters today.



Happily N'Ever After

10 Check out the **Random Cartoons Screening** in Burbank California today. ASIFA-Hollywood is hosting a screening of Frederator's new series of cartoon shorts with all 39 creators. Members can get a sneak peek at some of the new cartoons in addition to hearing creators discuss their short films. For more info, visit www.asifa-hollywood.org.

12 Luc Besson's CG-animated feature *Arthur and the Invisibles* gets a wider release in theaters nationwide. Fans of Beatrix Potter and her children's books will be taking in *Miss Potter*, starring Renée Zellweger and Ewan McGregor. Directed by Chris Noonan, the biopic will feature some animated sequences.

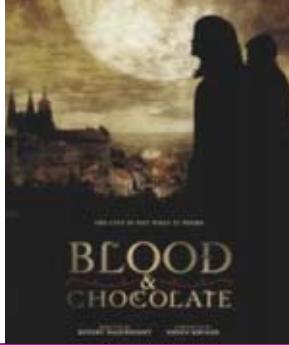


Arthur and the Invisibles

18-28 Based in Park City, Utah, the **Sundance Film Festival** offers a cool collection of animation shorts from indie artists from all over the world (<http://festival.sundance.org/2007>). You can also find more off-beat projects at the **Slamdance Film Festival** (www.slamdance.com).



26 If you have a craving for brooding Euro vampires, then you should check out the new movie, *Blood and Chocolate*, starring Hugh Dancy and Olivier Martinez in theaters today.



23 The TV hit parade continues on DVD this week with *Gundam Seed: Destiny Vol. 6*, *Avatar: Book Two: Earth Vol. 1* and *Alvin and the Chipmunks: A Chipmunk Valentine*.



29-30 Worried about the state of television? Then you should hop a flight to the Big Apple and attend the **Future TV Show North America**, where many of the small-screen movers and shakers address issues shaping the future of television as well as all the new platforms that are waiting in the aisles (www.futuretvna.com).



Jan. 29-Feb. 2

Forget about the slot machines and blackjack tables! This week, the real action in Monte Carlo happens at the **IMAGINA 2007** market, a cool event focusing on 3D digital content creation (www.imagina.mc).



To get your company's events and products listed in this monthly calendar, please e-mail cwebb@animationmagazine.net

FRAME-BY-FRAME

Close Encounters with Toon Players

Mike Moon, VP of Animation, Disney Channel

Years in the Biz: I began working on *The Simpsons* at Klasky Csupo in 1990. I started my new position at Disney Channel in March of 2006. [Mike is an Emmy-winner for his work as an art director and writer for Cartoon Network's *Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends*. His other credits include *Clone High*, *The Powerpuff Girls Movie*, *House of Mouse* and *101 Dalmatians: The Series*.]

Hometown: Simi Valley, Calif.

Background notes: I studied character animation at CalArts during the '90s where it was truly a hotbed for talent during the toon boom of that era.

What I thought I wanted to do when I was a kid: I knew I wanted to have a career in animation since I was six or seven. But I also considered the theme park world as well as a career in music. I knew I wasn't going to be a banker or doctor or lawyer!

Toons I love: I grew up on the Warner Bros. cartoons, the classic Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck shorts as well as the Disney features from the '40s all the way to the '70s.

Role models: I was fortunate to have wonderful art teachers along the way—my eighth grade art teacher encouraged me to consider a career in the arts. At CalArts, it was Bob Winquist, the head of the character animation program. A day doesn't go by that I don't think of him. So many of the students who studied at the program during his watch went on to become great forces in the animation world. He's the perfect example of how one person can affect so many lives in our world. In the animation business, I look at artists like Maurice Noble, Mary Blair, Ivan Earl, Marc Davis and Ward Kimball for inspiration.

TV shows I never miss: I love *The Shield*, *The Office* and *Survivorman*.

Musical tastes: I listen to all kinds of music on satellite radio. I'm a big fan of the old country stuff.

Things I look for: We have multiple platforms for Disney Channel and Jetix. We are really expanding our definitions for what we look for on Disney Channel. We are really exploring new production pipelines, new narrative forms and opening up the talent pool worldwide. It's crazy how much great talent is out there. We are also expanding our world on Jetix. We started out as a boy action outlet, but now we're moving more towards a mix of comedy and adventure. With the success of *Yin Yang Yo!*, we've seen that comedy performs really well internationally. What we're not looking for is your standard muscle-guy-in-a-spandex-suit action show. You can see a strong influence of vinyl toys, motion graphics and infusion of the pop culture around us.

Do's and don'ts of pitching: It's always important to know the brand and the whole animation landscape. The pitches that excite me have a strong sense of the characters. Many of the biggest hits of our time have to do with the characters and not the high concept.

I hope I never have to hear ... any pitch that ends with "and hilarity ensues."

Future Plans: We want to really expand the ways we construct our production pipeline and tap into all kinds of visual styles and fresh talent. I don't want the word "generic" to be associated with anything that we do here. The bar is raised everywhere in pop culture and our biggest challenge is to take Disney Channel to uncharted territory. We want to develop projects that we're absolutely in love with. We want to play with genres and big conceptual ideas and find things that don't fit the usual molds.

The Big Picture: I am a firm believer that the good stuff will always rise to the top no matter how much content is out there. It's interesting to see the convergence of all the new platforms and watching how it all plays out. Overall, TV animation has never been in a better place. There has been so much quality work done in the past ten years. It's staggering to see how far we've come in one or two decades. We're right on the cusp of some huge innovations which may change the landscape even further.

Coming Attractions: We have high hopes for our next new show which rolls out in September of 2007. It's called *Phineas Ferb* and created by Dan Povelmeyer. It's 2D animated and our first board-driven project, which is a great way of constructing a show.

What I'm doing on a typical Sunday: I am usually hanging out with my family. I have a seven-year-old son and a five-and-a-half-year-old daughter (my own focus group). You'll find us at an ice skating rink, occasionally at Disneyland or just hanging out at Griffith Park. ■



To Jean, Jodi, Jan,
Eric, Ramin, Ryan,
Chris, Ron, Barbara,
Claire, Roberta, Ron,
Todd, Patrick, Mike,
Charles, Evelyn, Robby,
Michael, Thomas, Jake,
Christopher, Mercedes,
Ellen, Susanne, Sheri and
everyone else who has
contributed to
Animation Magazine
over the years...

Thanks and
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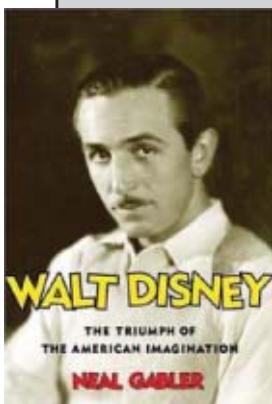
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Animation Lovers' Holiday Reading Guide

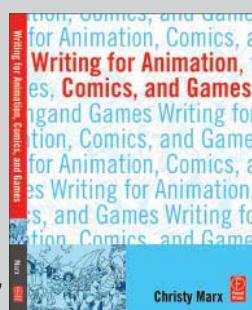
If you are looking for ways to escape the demons of dysfunctional family get-togethers this holiday season, we have four perfect animation-related book releases which will offer you solace for hours!

Neal Gabler's richly detailed biography *Walt Disney: The Triumph of the American Imagination* (Knopf, \$35) is a must-read for anyone who has even a passing interest in one of the most influential figures in American culture. This 880-page biography offers an insightful look at the man and his remarkable achievements, from his early days in a small town in Kansas to the birth of the studio and creation of Disneyland, to his role in the flourishing of features such as *Snow White*, *Fantasia* and *Pinocchio*. Although Gabler spends a little too much time dwell-



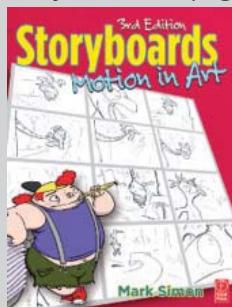
ing on typical bio-book psychobabble, there are plenty of important revelations about the day-to-day life at the studio, the employees' strike in 1941 and the business and creative models that built the Mouse Empire. Disney was once quoted as saying, "I only hope that we don't lose sight of one thing—that it was all started by a mouse." Gabler's tome certainly doesn't lose sight of the impact of that little rodent. Moreover, he offers a well-researched testament to the legacy of a brilliant man whose legacy continues to inspire new artists and animators every day.

Christy Marx begins her helpful how-to book about writing for animation with a great quote from an unlikely source, Thomas Jefferson. "The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do!" And she sticks with that line of thought throughout the volume titled *Writing for Animation, Comics, and Games* (Focal Press, \$34.95). A veteran of TV (*Jem and the Holograms*, *X-Men*, *Spider-Man*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*), graphic novels (*Conan*, *Red Sonja*) and gaming world (*Conquests of Camelot*), she offers practical advice on how to navigate the treacherous waters of these three converging media. Included in the book are discussions of the role of the writer, useful terminology and script formats, as well as tips on landing the right agent and finding resources and organizations that can assist you. Many of the readers of this magazine may already be familiar with these topics, but it never



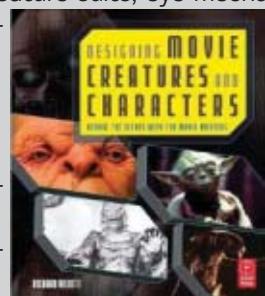
hurts to brush up on your knowledge of the biz.

And while we're discussing helpful breaking-into-the-business books, we just have to mention the 3rd edition of Mark Simon's beautiful *Storyboards: Motion in Art* primer (Focal Press, \$39.95). The day we received this book at the office, I dropped everything and simply spent at least half an hour admiring its richly illustrated pages. Simon, a frequent contributor



to Animag and a true veteran of the animation and movie industry, packs a wealth of knowledge and handy information about drawing, coloring, special effects and previz in this volume. He has added new chapters on gaming, multimedia boards, perspective, sketching and more. Simon has also included revealing interviews with artists such as Alex Saviuk, ILM's Mark Moore, Sean Cushing and Tim Burgard as well as some top-notch exercises for neophytes. If you're seriously considering a career as a storyboard artist, you can't possibly find a better investment for your money. (Come on, you can even get it for around \$27 on amazon.com!)

This holiday season, fans of fantasy films and creature features are patiently awaiting the big-screen adaptation of *Eragon* (see related story on page 34). To whet your appetite for the dragon epic, you can check out Richard Rickitt's *Designing Movie Creatures and Characters*, (Focal Press, \$36.95) an image-packed volume about of some of the most beloved monster movies in cinema. Although some may argue about the comprehensiveness of the volume (obviously, Rickitt couldn't include every title and monster creator), he does a great job of offering chapters on the top craftsmen such as Walt Conti, Patrick Tatzopoulos, Mike Elizalde, Carlos Huante, Nuje Eczakdem, Steve Wang, Kazuchrio Tjusi and Jeff Himmel as well as acclaimed shops like Weta. There are behind-the-scenes pieces on *King Kong*, *Star Wars*, *X-Men*, *Alien*, *Hellboy* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* and revealing details about how molds, creature suits, eye mechanisms and masks are created and used in conjunction with animatronics, CGI and special suits. The author also throws in filmographies, a glossary of terms and dozens of concept illustrations and sketches. It's a monstrous treat, by any standard.



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

**BEST
ANIMATED
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FILM**

Directed by George Miller

**HAPPY
FEET**

"Easily the best animated film of the year. The visuals can be both intimate and breathtakingly grand."

Christy Lemire, Associated Press

"'Happy Feet' should win the Academy Award® for Best Animated Picture. It's the most ambitious movie I've seen in years."

Stephen Schaefer, Boston Herald

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X-mas Meets X-Files

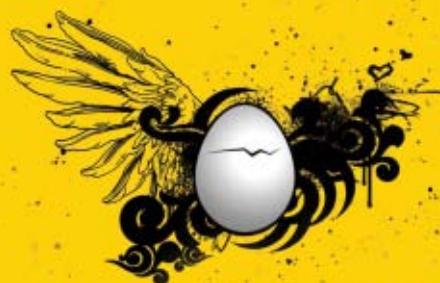


While we're not in the practice of reviewing children's books, it's hard not to recommend one created by talented animators and creature effects specialists **Stephen, Charles and Edward Chiodo**, especially when it comes with a forward by legendary vfx master Ray Harryhausen and an endorsement by iconic sci-fi author Ray Bradbury. Published by Baby Tattoo Books, **Alien Xmas** is available at bookstores and on amazon.com just in time for the holidays.

Alien X-Mas is the story of X, one of the thieving inhabitants of the planet Klepto. Sent to Earth to steal its gravity, the gray extraterrestrial arrives at the North Pole and mistakes Santa's workshop for a weapons-building facility and launches an all-out alien invasion. It's up to Santa and his top elf to save Christmas and the human race, unless the Klepts can learn that it's better to give than to steal.

Co-written by Stephen Chiodo and *Jumanji* screenwriter Jim Strain, the book combines traditional holiday concepts with sci-fi fun and a sly sense of humor, all beautifully illustrated by Charles Chiodo. If the book sells well, the brothers will be in a good spot to make a stop-motion animated feature based on it, and that we've gotta see!

—Ryan Ball



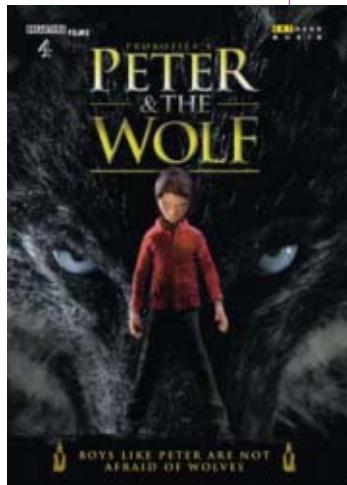
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Russian Classic Gets Stop Mo Treatment

Although many animation lovers are familiar with Clyde Geronimi's classic 1946 Disney version of the **Peter & the Wolf** tale, a new stop-motion adaptation of the Russian folk tale has been getting a lot of attention in Europe. Produced by Hugh Welchman and Alan Dewhurst of **Break-Thru films**, this half-hour project is directed by BAFTA-winning animator Suzie Templeton (*Dog*). Using Sergei Prokofiev's familiar classical piece, the project tells tale of a brave young boy who outsmarts and captures a wolf that has been stalking his grandfather's country home. Peter slips the guard of his over-protective grandfather and, with help from a crazy bird and a dreamy duck, manages to put an end to the beastly threat.

Shot in SeMaFor Studio in Lodz, Poland, the naturalist stop-mo animation has been described by some critics as "unburnished with an almost ghoulish appeal" and praised for the manner in which it works seamlessly in conjunction with the music.

Peter & the Wolf had its world premiere at London's Royal Albert Hall in September, with the Philharmonia Orchestra providing live accompaniment. The film will continue to screen in a series of live orchestral performances in 2007. Details on upcoming live events as well as information on how to purchase the recently released DVD can be found at www.breakthrufilms.co.uk. The DVD can also be purchased online at www.amazon.co.uk.



10 New Toon Collectibles

- Speed Racer Mach 5 Playset (Toynami, \$24.99)
- Batman Black & White Kelly Jones Statue (DC Direct, \$65.99)
- Corpse Bride Bust Ups Series 2 (Gentle Giant, \$114.99)
- Disney's Giggle With Me Plush Flounder (Mattel, \$19.99)
- Fraggle Rock Boober Fraggle Plush (Sababa, \$11.99)
- Gundam Seed Destiny Lunamaria Hawke (Bandai, \$59.99)
- Kingdom Hearts 2 Sora Action Figure (Diamond Select, \$25.99)
- Naruto 8-Inch Action Figure Wave 3 (Mattel, \$59.99)
- Superman Action Cape (Mattel, \$29.99)
- The Muppets: Gonzo 18-Inch Plush (Sababa, \$15.99)



Source: EntertainmentEarth.com, 11/22/2006

ANIMATION CELEBRATES MAGAZINE 20 YEARS

I HOPE I GET
MY NAME IN LIGHTS
WHEN I'M TWENTY!
CONGRATULATIONS,
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Riding Dragons

Sierra Ent. and Stormfront Studios breathe fire into *Eragon*.
by Ryan Ball

Christopher Paolini was just a teenager when he wrote *Eragon*, the first book in a fantasy series that was acquired by 20th Century Fox and made into an effects-laden, big-screen holiday release. And like all big tentpole film franchises, it has also moved into the interactive realm where gamers can try out their dragon-riding skills and partake of some good, old-fashioned medieval warfare. Published by Sierra Ent., the title is now out for Xbox 360, Xbox, PlayStation 2 and PC, with PSP, Nintendo DS, GameBoy Advance and mobile versions also available.

The *Eragon* story centers on a farm boy who discovers a dragon egg and embarks on a journey to take up the mantle of the legendary Dragon Riders and save his land of Alagaesia from the devious plans of the evil king Galbatorix. Developed for consoles by Stormfront Studios, the game lets players take on the role of Eragon or play as his dragon, Saphira, as they battle the king's sinister forces. A deep combat system allows for grapples, combos and magic attacks, and two-player co-op mode lets a friend get in on the action.

Producer Tim Ramage and his team at Sierra Ent. worked closely with 20th Century Fox and the filmmakers early on to make sure their visions were in sync. However, since game development often works very far in advance of the film production timeline, the folks at Sierra and Stormfront had to use their imaginations with a lot of elements.

"By the time we were receiving actual hard assets, such as movie set reference, concept art, shooting scripts, etc., we found we weren't far off on some things, and almost dead on with other elements," Ramage notes. "We were also able to bring [cast members] Ed Speleers (Eragon), Sienna Guillory (Arya), Garrett Hedlund (Murtagh) and Robert Carlyle (Durza) into



the studio to record their characters for the game. Additionally, we secured the likenesses of all the major characters, including Jeremy Irons, John Malkovich and Djimon Hounsou."

The game assets were created mostly with Autodesk's Maya and Ramage tells us one of the main goals for the animation was to find a happy medium between the realism that gamers expect from next-gen technology and defining the narrative through a highly-stylized "fairy tale" filter. "Through the technique of blendo, a visual collage of real photos, CG and hand-drawn images, we accomplished this vision," he remarks.

According to Ramage, players will be most enthralled with the aerial dragon fights and the co-op capabilities. Specific levels of the game will put the player in control of Saphira and Eragon in the air as they rein fire and other devastating attacks down on their enemies. In two-player mode, one player controls Saphira while the other manipulates Eragon on her back. At any time during the game, a second player can also take on the role of an ally character —wise mentor Brom in the first half and flashy, wisecracking Murtagh in the second half of the game.

While games featuring dragons are a dime a dozen, Ramage says *Eragon* stands out from the pack because Paolini's story lends itself perfectly to exciting gameplay. "Think about it," he implores, "Eragon has a sword, a bow and the ability to use magic... and then add a dragon into the mix. This is the stuff that great fantasy video games are made of."

Handheld versions of the game were developed by Amaze. The PSP game is a dragon-riding sim that has players test their mettle in six different arenas and the Nintendo DS title is an action RPG with an upgradeable combat system. Meanwhile, Gameboy Advance owners can take part in turn-based RPG fun with ten playable characters from the film and a few others from the book. We're just hoping nobody has their cell phones to play developer Kaolink's mobile game in the theater when we go to see the movie on Dec. 15! ■

Re-animated

His new brain has a mind of its own.



Happy 20th, *Animation Magazine*
from the new management of Appleday Studios.



Game On for the Holidays!

Yep, it's hard to believe but it's that time again. As Santa checks his naughty and nice list to see who's going to get a PlayStation 3 or a Nintendo Wii, we've come up with our own list of favorites that would make perfect stocking stuffers for the gamer in your life. **by Ryan Ball**

GAMES

Flushed Away

DreamWorks and Aardman Animations managed to turn the sewer into a cool place to visit and now fans can take the plunge into that world with this humorous adventure from D3 Publisher and developer Monkey Bar Games. The game casts players as one of three characters from the film—Roddy, Rita and the Jammy Dodger, Rita's boat which has a unique personality of its own. Navigating more than 10 levels and a number of mini-games, gamers can utilize such weapons as a rat trap catapult, a cocktail sword, pudding mix and other items found in the sewer to defeat enemies and dodge floating debris. The game features some impressive character animation and is now available for PlayStation 2.



Star Wars: Best of PC

For those of you who like all the greatest hits on one disc, LucasArts has combined five of the most popular Star Wars games developed for personal computers in one package

dubbed Star Wars: The Best of PC. Boasting hundreds of hours of action, strategy and role-playing fun,



this set is available for a limited time and includes a free, 14-day trial of the popular massively multiplayer online game Star Wars: Galaxies. With this deal, you get Star Wars: Empire at War, Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic, Star Wars Battlefront, Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast, and Star Wars Republic Commando, all for just \$39.99.

WTF (Work Time Fun)

While playing video games normally gets in the way of finding a job, this casual PSP entry from Japan has players taking on various part-time jobs in order to earn money to buy more mini-games and various items including practical tools and useless trinkets. You can also subcontract work to friends via wi-fi and collect the money they earn. D3 Publisher and Sony Computer Entertainment International have even included a personal e-mail account complete with scam messages that can cost you virtual money if you open them. Almost like having a real job, just much more fun!



Chicken Little: Ace in Action

Tykes will love this Buena Vista Games movie tie-in developed by DC Studios for Nintendo's DS and Wii platforms. Playing as Chicken Little's superhero alter ego and Hollywood versions of his misfit friends, players must save the world from the evil Foxy Loxy and her Amazonian sidekick, Goosey



Loosey. Five campaigns each contain three missions featuring soldier, tank and spaceship action while multiplayer mini-games are available through local two-person wireless.

Xiaolin Showdown

Everybody will be kung fu fighting with this game based on the popular Warner Bros. animated series. Available for PSP, PlayStation 2, Xbox and Nintendo DS, the title features four playable characters from the show on a quest to find mystical power-granting objects known as Shen



Gong Wu and keep them from falling into the hands of evil boy genius Jack Spicer and his army of robots. And, of course, it wouldn't be Xiaolin Showdown without a little less-than-friendly martial arts competition.

Elebits

In Konami's first game for the Nintendo Wii, players must search high and low for Elebits, mischievous little creatures that are the source of the world's power. The Wii's innovative controller allows gamers to push, pull, lift and throw anything in the environment in order to get to the playful critters, which in turn power up various implements used to continue the search. Since you don't have to be a hard-core gamer to figure this one out, it's great fun for the whole family. ■



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Building Besson's Incredible Shrinking Boy

How the team at French vfx house BUF helped Luc Besson bring his *Arthur and the Invisibles* world to animated life.
by Ramin Zahed

A brave young boy shrinks down in size and enters a magical world invisible to the human eye. Yes, you might have heard the premise before—and in case you were one of the few moviegoers who caught last summer's *The Ant Bully*—you might have even seen a CG-animated movie built on that theme. However, French writer-director Luc Besson and his team of tech wizards at Paris-based fx house BUF want audiences to know that their holiday movie *Arthur and the Invisibles* (*Arthur and the Minimoys*) will be unlike anything else in toon town.

Besson, who is best known in the U.S. for directing the genre-defining visual effects-driven *The Fifth Element* (as well as *La Femme Nikita*, *Subway* and *Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc*) recalls the day he found the inspiration for the project. "Patrice Garcia, one of the main designers on *Fifth Element* came to see me one day and showed me a drawing he had done of a little guy on a leaf," says Besson during a recent visit to New York City. "He asked me to help him develop a TV series based on the drawing, but I was so amazed by his work that I immediately decided that I wanted to do a movie centered on it."

To test the waters, Besson and



Garcia first made a one-minute short film exploring a smooth mix of live action, mo-cap and CG animation. Then, they went to vfx expert Pierre Buffin and his BUF studio in Paris, which have done impressive work on many features including *Finding Neverland*, *Alexander*, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, *Batman Begins* and *The City of Lost Children*.

With the help of Garcia and his wife Céline, Besson created a magical world inhabited by miniature creatures. The helmer actually wrote four books about these characters which became bestsellers in his native country and have sold half a million copies worldwide. "When you deal

with the fantasy world, books often help generate interest among future filmgoers," explains Besson. "You can see this trend reflected in the success of movies such as *Lord of the Rings*, *Chronicles of Narnia* and all the *Harry Potter* films."

The storyline required a seamless blending of live action (Freddie Highmore and Mia Farrow star in the non-animated parts of the movie which is shot on 35 mm film) and the CG-based portion, which lasts about an hour. "To refine our methodology, we conducted many different tests, adapting Patrice's drawings to 3D, model lighting tests and reporting on the 3D scenes," says Buffin. "Our initial idea was to have



micro-models built to a one scale, but we soon realized that shooting on this scale presented a series of restraints."

Thanks to the special proprietary tools developed specifically at BUF, Buffin knew he had what he needed to go forward with the project. He explains, "We had an excellent modeling artist, a revolutionary animation program that allowed us to free ourselves from the constraints and

a methodology that let us build any humanoid made up of a skeleton with muscles and facial expressions,

the 3D models."

In addition, the R&D team worked continuously to make sure all the shaders and renderings were up to speed and optimized, improving the particles and fluids, managing the color pass and improving various algorithms. Additionally, the artists used Mental Image's popular Mental Ray software program to render the project. "It's the only outside software we use," says Buffin. "We've been using it for over 15 years and have developed a lot around it!"

For Besson, the initial stages of the film were no different than all

based on the drawings, the team created a template for the models using simple volumes in Styrofoam. Then came the task of building the initial animatic (one pose per second) with a basic render to allow the anticipation of the problems before building the final models.

This was followed by building the actual models based on the uploaded template (built three times the real size of objects in the real world). As Buffin explains, "This was the right compromise between a model too small to photograph and build and a model too big to allow the use of natural resources such as wood and leaves."

After Besson reviewed this initial animation and gave his notes and suggestions, the team went to work on the 3D lighting of the shots and shooting of the models. The images were then projected onto the 3D volumes which allowed the camera to move around them. This step was followed by the actual rendering of the characters so that they would be integrated into the sets.

"One of the most important points of our process was the way Buffin does motion capture," says Besson. "He's a genius—a little French John Lasseter!"

"Sometimes, it's the simple shots—a certain look, a really genuine human expression—that's what makes it worthwhile in the end."

—Director Luc Besson



etc., photogrammetry [technology in which the 3D coordinates of points on an object are determined by measurements made in photographic images taken from various positions], a useful task manager, compositing software and real-time image verification at any resolution, in-house 2D drawing software and a 3D paint which let us make changes directly on

his live-action projects. "For the first nine months, I simply worked with the actors—this is the job I know," he notes. "To create the reference point for the animation team, I shot everything like a live-action movie on a mini-digital video camera."

As Buffin explains, after Garcia's storyboard was edited with voice-over and the 3D characters were created



He has invented a system that doesn't require wiring the actors [as perhaps audiences have seen with Tom Hanks in *The Polar Express*]. We were able to use this wonderful reference we got from the actors without any trappings of the wiring system people associate with motion capture."

After many months of development and prep work, the actual production of *Arthur* began in January of 2004. With an estimated price tag of 60 million euros (over \$70 million), the film may still be considered cheap by U.S. studio standards. However, both Besson and Buffin point out that a lot of hard labor went into the creation of this magical world. "We created 1,600 shots, 1,350 of which actually made it to the film," says Buffin. "It took about 27 months for an average of 100 people to create 35 sequences—80 of whom had never worked in feature animation before!"

"We're very proud of our method which allowed a live-action director to direct an animated movie while directing the actors and moving the camera around," says Buffin. "In short, he was able to direct the movie he wanted to make."



The toughest part of the job for Besson, however, was convincing himself that he was making the right decisions. "I started five years ago, and nobody gets to see the first 30 million euros you spend on the movie. You have to trust your vision and thank the people around you who let you go ahead without seeing anything for the first three years!"

Besson admits that there were times when he had to fight depression because he had nothing to show for all his work. "Then, suddenly, in a week or two, there were hundreds of shots ready to go—and then you had to make some tough choices to edit and refine the images. Sometimes, I would cut a few shots, and the animation team would say, 'Are you kidding? We spent six months on those shots!' But then, we cut them and had to do what we had to do—and in the long run, it was the right decision. Anyway, these days, you can always release the edited footage as DVD bonuses!"

When asked about the the amazing

renaissance in French animation in recent years, Besson says he thinks Americans had a lot to do with it! "To be honest, I think a lot of French artists got hired at Pixar and DreamWorks and Disney about 10 years ago. They acquired a lot of knowledge in the States, and they brought it back to France. A decade ago, the technique was very expensive and slow, and now it's more affordable to make CG-animated features."

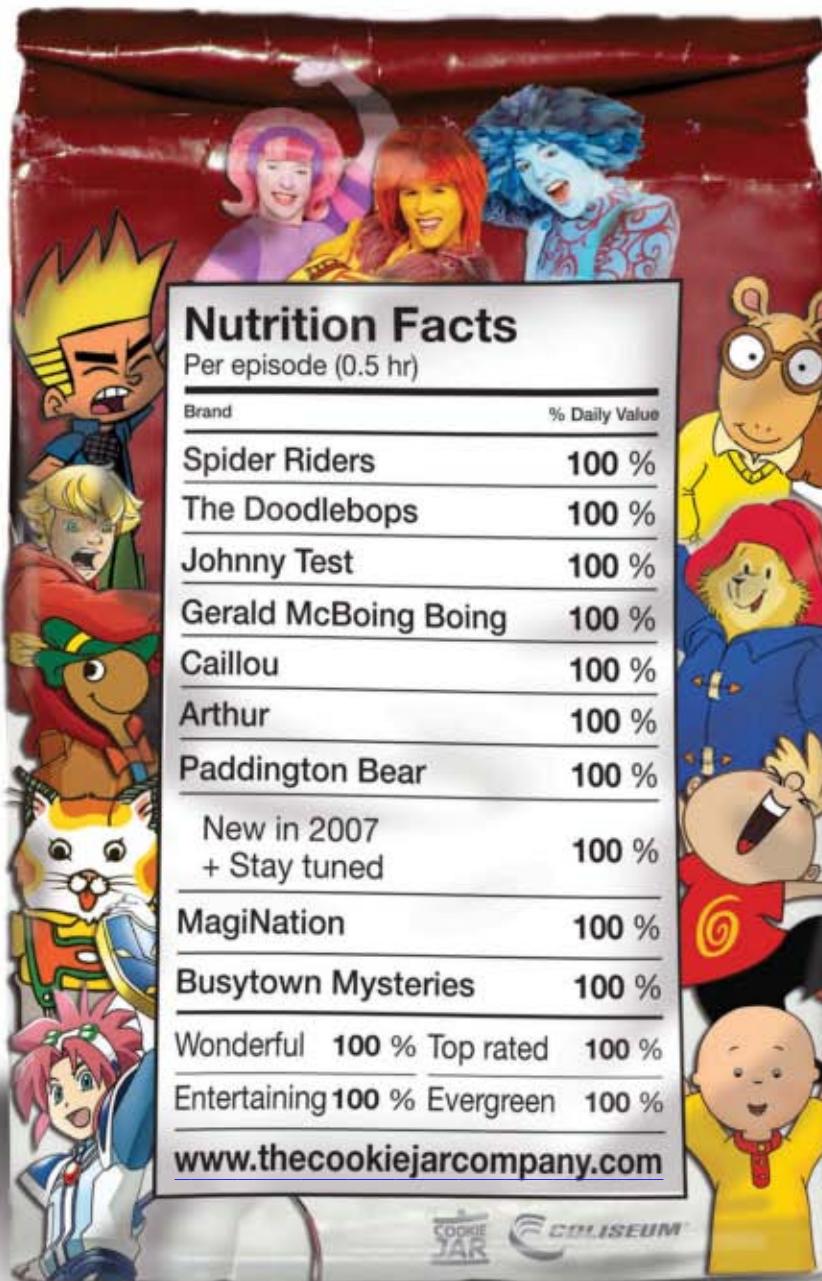
A fan of classic Disney features such as *The Jungle Book* and *The Lady and the Tramp* and the poetry of Hayao Miyazaki movies, Besson says he's saddened by the short shift 2D animation has been getting in the U.S. "Some subjects are better told in 2D animation and we should keep that tradition alive," he notes.

There have been rumors in France that *Arthur and the Invisibles* may be Besson's final directing effort. Some say he may quit the business and devote his time to one of his Parisian-based youth charities. For now, at least, he seems pretty happy about his adventure in the realm of childhood fantasy. "I saw the first print of the movie in Paris only a week ago, and I was surprised that I got really caught up in it! The fact that we were able to capture genuine emotional moments came as a surprise. Sometimes, it's the simple shots—a certain look, a really genuine human expression—that's what makes it worthwhile in the end." ■

The Weinstein Co. releases *Arthur and the Invisibles* in select theaters on Dec. 15. The movie gets a wider release on January 12.



For the Kid Inside!



COOKIE JAR Entertainment



Spinning a Magical Digital Web

The new adaptation of E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* weaves in numerous digital sequences from various vfx houses around the world to bring its cast of talking animals to realistic life. by Ellen Wolff



Director Gary Winick

FEATURE

here's something about the holiday season that invites the best digital menagerie to the big screen. As it was with last year's *Chronicles of Narnia* and *King Kong* and 2004's *Lord of the Rings* finale, filmmakers are saving some of their best CG-animated handiwork for the end of the year. And director Gary Winick's adaptation of E.B. White's heart-warming classic, *Charlotte's Web*, is no exception to the rule.

The live-action/CG feature (a joint venture between Paramount Pictures, Walden Media, Kerner Entertainment Co. and Nickelodeon Movies) boasts a host of big names—Julia Roberts, Kathy Bates, Steve Buscemi, Robert Redford, Jennifer Garner, Oprah Win-

frey, John Cleese and Dakota Fanning. But Fanning alone—playing a farm girl enamored with Wilbur the pig—appears on film. The others voiced animal characters that were animated to look alive, created by artists from Australia and America to bring the much-loved 1952 children's book to the screen.

White's poignant tale of a pig whose life is saved by a heroic spider and a wisecracking rat has long intrigued filmmakers. (Toon fans may recall the 1973 version produced by Hanna-Barbera and Sagittarius which featured the voice of Debbie Reynolds as the lead arachnid.) Notably, it was Winick (*Tadpole*, *13 Going on 30*)—an actors' director, not an effects filmmaker—

who headed this large animation production. "Rather than think about these animals as animated effects, Gary considered them actors," says the film's vfx supervisor John Berton, who teamed with animation supervisor Eric Leighton to wrangle the film's digital barnyard.

Making the animated characters appear photoreal—even while they spoke lines—was the key challenge. It was tackled by "casting" different studios to perform specific characters.

"Animators are actors," asserts Berton. "They may think they're hiding from the cameras, but they're not." The role of Wilbur, who was filmed with face replacement in mind, went to L.A.'s Rhythm & Hues (Oscar winner for



Babe). Templeton the rat and Charlotte the spider were “played,” respectively, by Berkeley, Calif.-based Tippett Studio and Rising Sun Pictures in Adelaide, Australia. *Charlotte’s* swarm of offspring came from down under as well, courtesy of Sydney’s Fuel International.

As Berton notes, “If we had to show behaviors that a photographed animal couldn’t perform, we replaced the whole thing.” That’s when Melbourne’s Digital Pictures Iloura stepped in. Overall, the goal was consistency. “We didn’t worry about one vendor trying to animate two characters talking to each other. That would have been eas-



‘Shared shots—*NIGHTMARE*.’ So nobody had any illusions.”

To provide a guide via moving storyboards, *Charlotte’s Web* was previsualized in Softimage|XSI by L.A.-based Proof. “We tried to get it correct in pre-viz before it went to the effects houses,” says Berton. To create approximately 1,000 effects shots, such preparation was essential, particularly for houses creating characters in full CG.

Finishing the Rat

Among those was Templeton, voiced by Steve Buscemi. Tippett Studio’s task was to make the CG rat rant sarcastically without straying far from

manoid, it would break the movie. So we hit the books on rat motion and also filmed our pet rat. By stepping through lots of reference footage, we broke down ‘ratty’ motion signatures.”

But creating facial expressiveness wasn’t easy. “Rats’ eyes don’t face forward, and they can’t furrow their brows. So we moved lots of flesh around.” While Labonte’s team used Autodesk’s Maya, Templeton’s fur was added at render time with proprietary software. “Adding fur can cost you some expressiveness. It’s as if I suddenly sprouted a 12-inch beard all over my face.”

Also among Tippett’s assignment were shots where Templeton is chased by crows. “Grooming feathers meant extending our fur tool,” recalls Labonte. “Some shots had a CG crow flying alongside a real one. Once or twice, the director even asked for changes in the performance of the real crow!”

Rising Sun Pictures also grappled with fur on Charlotte herself. VFX supervisor John Dietz reports, “With spiky fur she looked scary, but up close her fur looks groomed and she’s more endearing.” The bigger challenges involved managing Charlotte’s eight

“Animators are actors ... They may think they’re hiding from the cameras, but they’re not.”

—Charlotte’s Web’s vfx supervisor, John Berton

ier logically, but we went for performances first.” Yet mixing animals from different houses within single shots required careful matching of eye lines and lighting styles. “We sat everybody down at the beginning and said:

what real rats can do. Animation supervisor Todd Labonte observes, “Rats don’t emote with their tails like dogs, and we couldn’t put him up on his back legs or have him point at things. If Templeton jumped around like a hu-

eyes and legs and suggesting a 'faux mouth' behind her mandibles—a mouth that speaks with Julia Roberts' voice. RSP used Softimage|XSI and 3Delight's renderer to create Charlotte but wrote proprietary software to simulate her intricate webs. The star spider's web-weaving is pivotal to the plot, and she has to scurry through her handiwork while it sways in the breeze.

Depicting a two-and-a-half-inch spider presented problems of scale. As Dietz explains, "We had to convey the feeling that she's small, even when she fills up the screen." Fortunately, Charlotte's key scenes were completely CG, so Berton notes, "We could cheat the depth-of-field. Charlotte's world is very macro. Anything beyond three inches is out of focus. So we digitally 'photographed' her as if we were shooting with macro lenses."

The animated spiders assigned to Fuel International included Charlotte's babies crawling from their eggs, and vfx supervisor Simon Maddison admits, "It was tricky." While Fuel typically animates with Maya, they used Enge-nuity's A.I. Implant software to simulate those swarms of babies. An equally difficult sequence showed Charlotte's offspring descending en masse from the sky. "I didn't believe that actually could occur," says Maddison. "But on set one day, somebody looked up and sure enough, that was happen-

Funny Farm: Rhythm & Hues created many of the film's face replacements for the cows, sheep and dozens of pigs representing Wilbur, using wire frames to get accurate match moves.



ing. We got a couple of minutes of footage that we could reference. It was amazing."

Fuel's portfolio also included beak replacements for Stan Winston's animatronic geese when post-production changes in dialogue were made. "The geese have lots of comic lines," says Maddison. Winick thought they'd be more expressive if Fuel animated some tongues because, as Maddison explains, "Lip syncing is difficult when characters can only open and close their mouths. Add a tongue and suddenly you have a whole new world of readability."

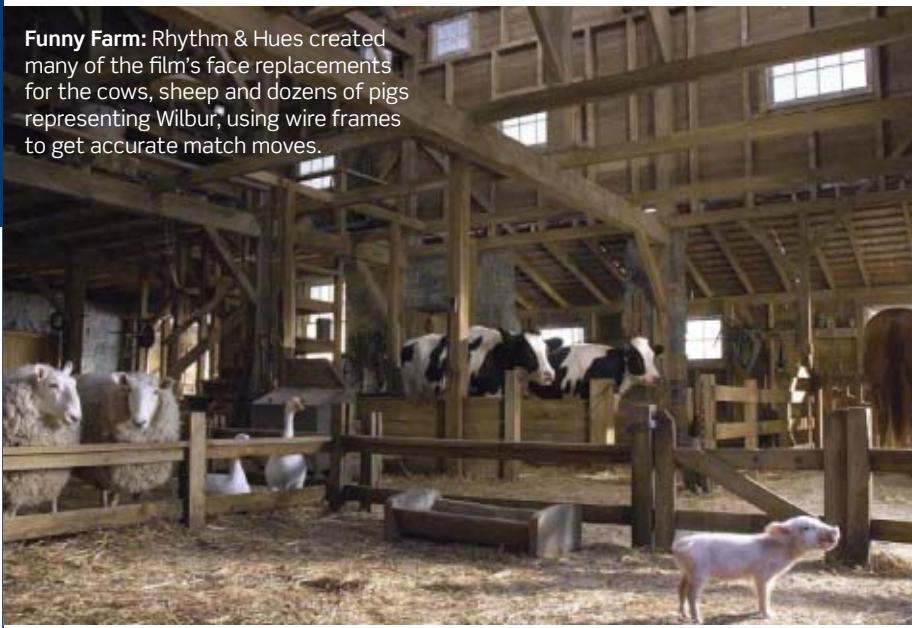
Face replacement was also central to the shots done at Rhythm & Hues, which used its suite of proprietary

tools. Animation Supervisor Craig Talmy remarks, "The majority involved live-action footage of cows, sheep and dozens of pigs representing Wilbur. We made wire frames of everything from the pigs' shoulders forward, so we'd have accurate match-moves in every frame. Then we'd put the film footage onto the wire frame. It had to work perfectly, so that once we animated Wilbur's dialogue, everything lined up."

While Wilbur is a star of *Charlotte's Web*, Talmy recalls, "Everybody wanted to animate the sheep. The one voiced by John Cleese had the best lines. Since he's an old sage, we put Andy Rooney eyebrows on him to add expressiveness!" Berton adds, "R&H's results always stayed true to the performance of the live animals." He believes this is crucial to make audiences think they're watching live action. "We want people to believe it was the most amazing job of animal training."

After two years of web-based international collaboration (using Apple's Quicktime and iChat software) the moment of truth arrived in the Digital Intermediate session for the feature. As Berton watched countless elements blend together, he admits, "One of my proudest moments was when everything matched." Or as Charlotte seamlessly wrote on her web, "Terrific." ■

Paramount releases *Charlotte's Web* in U.S. theaters on December 15. The feature will roll out internationally through February.





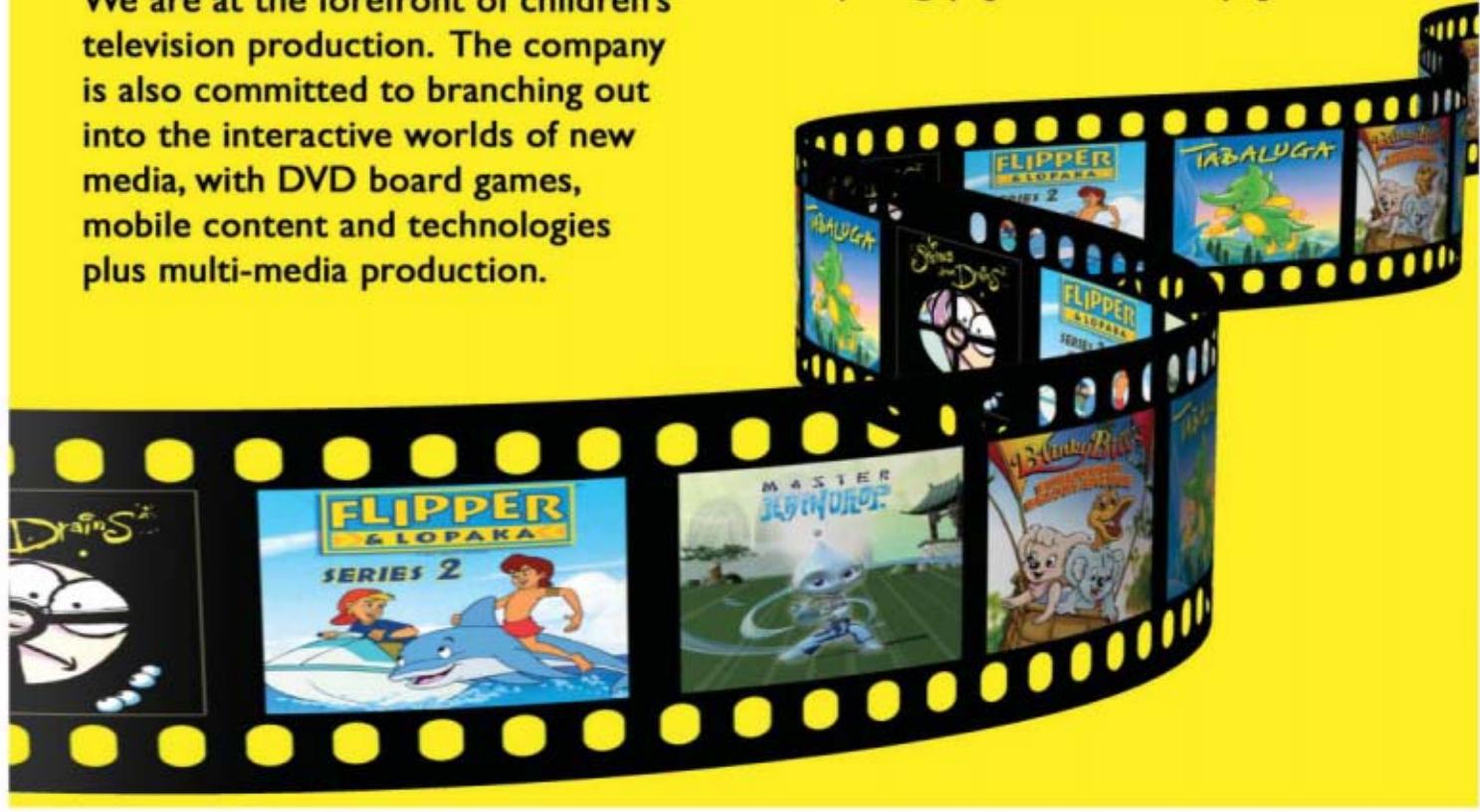
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Your Guide to the 2006 Oscar Race

[Part 1 of 3]

An Ode to the Year of the Hyperactive CG-Animated Animals!

by Thomas J. McLean

The 16 films that qualified for the fifth animated features Oscar race show just how far the category has come in a short time.

The list shows the validity of complaints that there are too many funny talking animals films—*Barnyard*, *Ice Age: The Meltdown*, *Open Season*, *Over the Hedge*, *The Wild*—but also shows the increasing diversity of the field. Motion capture, which qualifies under the Academy's definition of animation by virtue of being a frame-by-frame technique, made the list via Sony's *Monster House*, Richard Linklater's ad-

aptation of Philip K. Dick's sci-fi classic *A Scanner Darkly* and French-Belgian produced action tale *Renaissance*. Traditional animation is represented by Universal's *Curious George* and the soon-to-be-released anime feature *Parika*.

But as the Oscars loom once again, most films will fade to also-ran status as the Academy's nominating committee pares the list down to five nominees. The only film experts agree is guaranteed a nomination is Pixar's smash-hit *Cars*.

"Cars seems to be zooming ahead in

the race this year," says Tom O'Neil, columnist for [The Envelope.com](#). "Every Pixar film in the existence of this category has been nominated, and two of them have won."

"I would think *Cars* is a given," agrees critic Leonard Maltin, author of several books on animation. "Beyond that, all bets are off."

The onslaught of movies about hip talking animals on a big adventure journey is going to play some kind of factor. The achievements of those films

[continued on page 30](#)



Digging for Oscar Gold: Among the animated films that made the eligibility requirements this year are (clockwise from top left) *Arthur and the Invisibles*, *Renaissance*, *Ice Age: The Meltdown*, *Monster House*, *A Scanner Darkly*, *Everyone's Hero*, *Cars*, *Flushed Away*, *Open Season*, *Over the Hedge*, *Happy Feet*, *Curious George* and *Barnyard*.

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Oscar Race

continued from page 28

may be overlooked by voters who are frustrated with their similarities and the underlying cynicism of studios all swallowing the same formula in an attempt to establish a foothold in the potentially lucrative market for animated features.

"The studios seem to be trying to hit home runs with these big productions packed with celebrity voices," says O'Neil. "They tend to be too formulaic in terms of the little lost kid or the talking animals voiced by superstars who don't have to sit in a makeup chair."

Maltin says the number of movies and their similarities is enough to try the patience of even the most enthusiastic animation fan. "I never thought the day would come when I would be dreading a new animated feature, but I got to the same point as everybody else this year," he says.

Animated features also have started to feel overlong, he says. "For the first time ever, animated movies are suffering from the same malady that plagues live-action pictures, which is they're too long," says Maltin, who says *Happy Feet* and *Open Season* both could have been tightened up.

This makes figuring out which films will make the nominating cut hard to figure out. Looking at historical factors, at least seven films have a serious shot at a nomination—*Cars*, *Flushed Away*, *Happy Feet*, *Ice Age 2*, *Monster House*, *Open Season* and *Over the Hedge*. The academy's rules say with 16 films qualifying, there will be five nominees, meaning at least two of those films will not get a nomination. If one of the few films slated for late-year releases were to for some reason fail to qualify, the rules say the category will feature three nominations.

Animation historian and author Jerry Beck (cartoonbrew.com, *The Animated Movie Guide*) says that each of those

films has its supporters and figuring out the race truly becomes a guessing game. "People have strong feelings about some of these other films," he says. "It's a wide open race."

O'Neil says he expects *Ice Age* as a sequel will not make the cut, and expects the race for the final nomination will come down to *Over the Hedge* and *Flushed Away*, with the latter being the true wildcard in the race. "It not only had the advantage of being newer, but the story of a pampered rich rat suddenly having everything literally flushed away and being lost is the core neurosis of filmmakers in the chancy Hollywood world, that any minute everything they have could be stolen away."

It's unclear if the use of motion capture will affect the chances of a film such as *Monster House*. The technique qualifies as animation under the Academy's rules, but converting the performances of real actors into animated characters is not without controversy.

Maltin says he has yet to hear a con-



"There will be some resistance to films that go too far off the beaten path either in technology or story material ... but I don't think people who vote in the Academy are savvy enough about animation to break down in their minds what the components of a movie are."

—Movie historian and critic Leonard Maltin

vincing reason about the benefits of the technique. "The answers I've gotten about the level of nuance in the performance don't wash because I've seen the work of great animators who can accomplish the very same thing," he says.

The category, however, is best animated feature—not best animation in a feature. The rules and the spirit of the category are intended for voters to consider the overall quality of the film and not the technique used to achieve it. That is certain to be the case in voting for the winner, which is done by the

entire academy membership, but it could be a subconscious factor in the nominating process. Nominees are chosen by a screening committee made up of members invited to join by a committee chairman named by the academy president. Committee members must see at least 80 percent of the eligible films in a theatrical setting and then will vote on the nominees.

In previous years, the academy's nominations have included CGI, anime and stop motion, indicating openness to the quality of films regardless of technique. *The Polar Express* failed to add motion capture to that list two years ago. However, *Monster House* pushed the technology forward and was a critical and commercial success, giving it a much better chance at a nomination.

A Scanner Darkly and *Renaissance* are less likely to make such a breakthrough, not so much because of their use of motion capture and rotoscoping as their poor critical reception. "There will be some resistance to films that go

too far off the beaten path either in technology or story material," says Maltin. "But I don't think the people who vote in the academy are necessarily savvy enough about animation to break down in their minds what the components of a movie are. They're just going to judge them as movies."

As the lone anime entry, *Paprika* also faces an uphill battle. While the techniques and style of anime are not an is-

sue, *Paprika* lacks the name identification of Hayao Miyazaki, who directed last year's nominee *Howl's Moving Castle* and 2002 winner *Spirited Away*. ■

Thomas J. McLean is a Los Angeles-based journalist who specializes in animation, comic books and visual effects. You can read his Bags & Boards blog about the comic-book industry at http://weblogs.variety.com/bags_and_boards.

Next month, you can read all about the tricky visual effects Oscar race. We'll also focus on the animated shorts category in our March issue.

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The Return of the Artiste

French director Michel Ocelot's triumphant *Azur and Asmar* is the perfect example of how to make artistic indie feature animated projects without relying on tired, idiotic formulas. **by Christopher Panzner**

If Michel Ocelot's latest film *Azur and Asmar*, a medieval Arabic fairy tale, is any indication of the vitality of French animation, we are now officially in what can only be called a Golden Age. And, thanks in large part to the trailblazing of Ocelot's mystical, culture-spanning genius, the words "astonishing" and "lyrical" are now being used as they were meant to be, not as buzz words for a rap sample or car accessory but to describe something exquisite and noble.

While it may have taken a while to gather a head of steam, the animation feature revolution is well under way—at least in Europe. And the success of Ocelot's latest films indicates that not only is the public a willing participant, but artists, producers and financiers are happy to be riding along.

Inspired by a familiar situation in the West today (i.e., the hostilities between older and recent immigrants), the film centers on two boys, blond-haired, blue-eyed Azur, son of a French nobleman, and black-haired, brown-eyed Asmar, whose immigrant mother, their nurse, raises them as brothers.

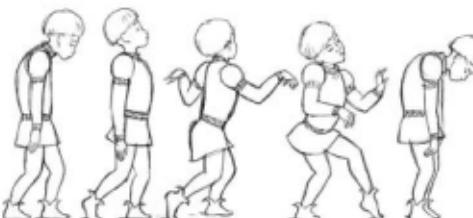
After a brutal separation, their destinies become intertwined once again as young men when Azur, who pines to visit the idyllic country described to him as a child by his surrogate mother (complete with genies and magical creatures), embarks on a journey to free the Fairy of the Djinns, whom Asmar is also determined to liberate. They are reunited under strange and cruel circumstances and ultimately help one another to succeed in, against the odds, establishing peace and harmony in their world.

Authentic Visions

When asked about his take on the French animation miracle of the past decade, Ocelot describes it as a "pas-

sage from desert to luxuriant forest." The sheer poetry and originality of *Azur and Asmar* not only rivals previous efforts like his two *Kirikou* films and *Princes and Princesses*, but the film feels like an oasis. The courage and audacity and complete disregard for the aesthetic and narrative conventions of Hollywood are sure to inspire independents everywhere to transcend the norm, to challenge the existing and to leap into the void of faith ... in the future and the paying public.

One of the strengths of Ocelot's films, ironically, is that he doesn't even fit into the romantic "know the rules in order to break them" cliché. And the rules, as we all know, were created in Hollywood. What does the self-taught Ocelot think of American animated feature films? "To continually do films that reference or mock other films, instead of making original, solid, personal, stand-alone films—seems a pity." He adds, "I never learned how to make a film ... and I've never made a children's film, since children couldn't care less about films made for them! Kids need to learn ... to learn about the world, to





Michel Ocelot

learn new things. And they don't need safe knowledge either, or need to understand immediately. My films are family films, and I'm glad that I can bring the family together.

There are certain things that I don't say as crudely because there are children in the audience, but I try to be truthful and to tell the whole truth."

Azur and Asmar embodies the bravura of a maestro—a mature, loving, sophisticated original storyteller. But Ocelot, who spent his childhood in Equatorial Guinea, is also folksy and a provocateur, bucking not only "common sense" (half the film's in Arabic, *without subtitles!*) but political correctness (immigration is a touchy subject after riots ravaged France a year ago) and tradition (*both sides of the story are told*). And, once again, the film has nudity in the form of breastfeeding—in the opening scene—perhaps guaranteeing it won't get distribution, like the Kirikou films, in the U.S.!

It's Not Normal
In stark contrast to some of the other animated features audiences have seen in 2006, Ocelot's labor of love took six years to make (from development to delivery) and cost 10 million euros (\$12.9 million U.S.). It mixes 2D backgrounds with CG-animated characters and showcases the talents of Ocelot as writer/primary character designer/director; head background artist Anne-Lise Lourdelet-Koehler; six color background artists; Oscar-winning composer Gabriel Yared (*The English Patient, Cold Mountain*); a bevy of secondary character designers, layout and background artists; a 50-person team for the digital preparation, animation and rendering; seven voice actors and a team of technicians. And, in contrast to Hollywood, every creative decision on the film was made by the director! The film was also made entirely in France and, says Ocelot proudly, "... was delivered on time!"

Although delivering on time must have pleased producers Christophe Rossignon and Jacques Bled (whose Mac Guff Ligne was responsible for all

the digital work), the 430,753 tickets sold in the first week of release in November must have been pleasing also. With this kind of public approval, one might be apprehensive about the critics' response to the movie, but Ocelot says the reviews have all been good. With customarily tender wit, he muses, "It's not normal."

Besides releasing two films in the theaters in the same year, writing books, teaching, a magazine and a musical comedy ... what's next for Ocelot? "First of all, several of my older short films are going to be released [BAFTA-winning *Les 3 inventeurs* (1979), *Les Filles de l'égalité* (1981), César-winner *La Légende du pauvre bossu* (1982), *Les 4 voeux* (1987)]... and, at the moment, I'm hesitating between a sensual, baroque feature for adults or a family fairy tale that takes place in Paris in 1900..."

Whew! No wonder his secretary skipped town with a jazz musician! ■

Chris Panzner recently created the production/distribution company Eye&Ear and is currently working on the blueprints to the gravy train. When he's not writing, he's in the kitchen cooking chicken.



A Female Firebreather Is Hatched

Director Stefen Fangmeier conjures up a magnificent dragon in the vfx-laden holiday feature, *Eragon*. **by Ron Magid**

Eragon, Christopher Paolini's blockbuster novel about a boy and his dragon, is brought to life by first time director and former visual effects supervisor Stefen Fangmeier, who enlisted his home base, ILM, and Weta to create the female firebreather, Saphira. Good choice since ILM's dragons—featured in *Dragonslayer*, *Willow*, *Dragonheart* and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*—remain unrivaled in the realm of visual effects (except arguably by those Weta created for *Lord of the Rings*).

But there were daunting challenges facing both houses as they tackled *Eragon*'s 400-plus dragon shots. First off, in the novel Saphira is blue, an unlikely color even for a dragon. "You want to be true to the essence of her character because the book has a huge fan following, but you still have to fit her into the scene," says ILM visual effects supervisor Samir Hoon. "In nature, you don't see

creatures of that size that are vibrant blue, so we had to come up with sophisticated rendering techniques of iridescence and scale patterns where she could be blue and still look like she belongs in the shot."

"As animators, we're always trying to find a reference that can connect with the audience, and lions had the right emotional range for Saphira [the female dragon]: She would never smile, but you would know when she was mad or concerned."

—ILM animation supervisor Glen McIntosh

Second, Saphira communicates telepathically, but since the actress vocalizing the part hadn't yet been cast, the animators couldn't impart the unknown performer's mannerisms to the CG character. (Actress Rachel Weisz is rumored to provide the dragon's voice in the final version.) "It would've been better if we'd

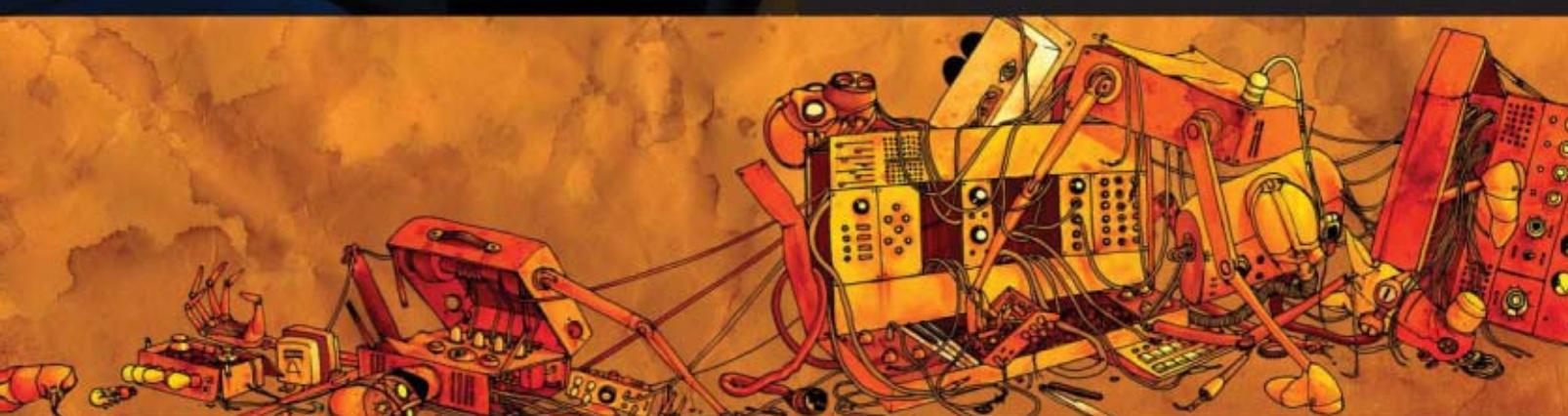
Glen McIntosh. "As animators, we're always trying to find a reference that can connect with the audience, and lions had the right emotional range for *continued on page 36*



Glen McIntosh



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Eragon

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Saphira. When lions close their eyes, they look content; when they're angry, their ears go flat, their muzzle scrunches up and they bare their teeth. Saphira would never smile, but you would know when she was mad or concerned."

Lions also provided the body language for the dragon—at least when she was on the ground. "Saphira's body structure is similar to a lion," McIntosh continues. "They're very large animals: They can weigh up to 500 pounds, yet they're very fast and look stoic and regal, which embodied all the qualities we needed for Saphira."

And then the CG model changed. "Originally, her neck was longer, more like a Loch Ness monster, and her front legs were shorter," McIntosh recalls. "We said, 'If we're going with this lion [approach], we have to make her front legs equal to her back legs if we want that lion-like gait—otherwise her back legs and hips would be higher. Stefen insisted, 'I don't want her butt up in the air. I want her to walk like a lion,' which meant making subtle adjustments to the model. Shortening her neck allowed us to have Saphira and Eragon in a two-shot. When her neck was longer, her head was out of frame, so it was hard to make an emotional connection between them."

When Saphira was airborne, the animators referenced eagles, which combined with her leonine aspects created a character that believably resembled the mythical griffin. "Then the wings changed from bat wings, which were a little too demonic, to scaly, feathered wings," Mc-



Intosh says. "So when she flew, we looked at how eagles soar—they don't need a lot of energy to sustain their flight—and how their wings are always moving, making subtle adjustments in the air. The final design is really neat, something you've never seen before."

But Saphira didn't just have to look sleek—she had to appear feminine. "It was an interesting problem," McIntosh admits. "We didn't want to bare her teeth much, which might make her too masculine; other times, her movements were a little too feminine so we added more weight to make her more animalistic. One of the trickiest things in traditional or CG animation is making something look heavy. For shots where she'd come in for a landing, I would do all this scientific reasoning: 'OK, she's got hollow bones, but she weighs roughly 3,000 pounds—roughly the size of a full grown rhino.' Other times I'd think, 'Whatever—just make it look cool' and throw science out the window, while trying to keep the suspension of disbelief grounded in reality. Sometimes she would make a landing, and look too heavy, so we'd rein back a bit so she felt like a real creature."

Last, she had to be animated from a hatchling to maturity, with lots of interaction with her lifelong friend, Eragon (Edward Speleers), particularly during the two major aerial sequences where Saphira soars heavenward. To achieve the best effect, nearly two months of bluescreen photography ensued with Speleers on a saddle straddling a mockup of Saphira's torso and neck atop a motion rig, which was driven by the animation and later replaced with a digital dragon.

"We wanted to get as much realistic motion from the live action as possible," Hoon says. "For some shots, we used the Cyclops motion-control camera, so both the rig and the camera were locked to the animation and we could almost see the final shot in real time on-set. But there were other times where we've added more secondary motion or more sweeping camera moves. It was all about making Saphira's flight look sleek and fast."

"There's a fine line between elegant and heavy," McIntosh concludes. "In the initial stages when Saphira's growing up, getting more adept at becoming a flying creature—we referenced a seal which on land is very gangly and awkward, but when it gets into its element, water, has these gorgeous ballistic movements. Because Saphira's a creature of the air, once she gets used to her wings, she's like a Peregrine falcon, doing these really dramatic dives and streaking across the sky at 200 miles per hour."

Ron Magid is a Los Angeles-based journalist who specializes in visual effects. **20th Century Fox's Eragon** will premiere in U.S. theaters on December 15.





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Photographing Fairies (and Stick Bug)

How a team of talented vfx artists brought the surreal creatures of *Pan's Labyrinth* to cinematic life. **by Barbara Robertson**

In 1944, in the grim, violent aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, Franco's victorious fascists spared no mercy for those who still resisted. In his new movie *Pan's Labyrinth*, writer-director Guillermo del Toro (*Hellboy*, *The Devil's Backbone*) has planted a young girl inside a fairy tale set against this harsh historic reality.

On her way to her evil stepfather's house (a brutal captain in Franco's army) the girl befriends a greenish stick bug. Later, the stick bug leads her to a labyrinth. There, a faun (Doug Jones) gives her tests involving a fat toad and a creature with eyes in his hands. But, don't be deceived. This is no child's fairy tale; del Toro's film is as much a horrorfest as a surrealistic fantasy.

Beginning with its premiere at Cannes, critics have raved about the film and its "mesmerizing visual effects" which are "sparingly and precisely applied" in the trades. Santa Maria, Calif.-based visual effects studio CafeFX handled all the digital visual effects under the supervision of Everett Burrell. A crew that

ranged between 40 and 50, nearly half the studio, worked on *Pan's Labyrinth* from June 2005 until April 2006, and created around 300 shots.

"Our main jobs were the green stick bug, the fairies, some of the environments, and fixing Pan's legs," says Burrell. In addition, the team matched a CG toad to a practical effects toad for some shots, and created CG legs for a character in this low-budget film. It was the small studio's first big character show and the first film on which CafeFX was the sole effects house.

Although they created previsualizations for a few key shots, the visual effects team worked largely from elaborate storyboards drawn by del Toro while



he was in Madrid working on the script. "We followed those storyboards on set," says Burrell. During filming, Burrell spent around five months on

location in Spain with del Toro, primarily in and around a mill—the stepfather's house—built in the middle of a forest. "The labyrinth was built there as well," Burrell says. "That's where they shot the film. When it was night, it was night. When it was cold and rainy, we got cold and wet."

Back in sunny California, CafeFX deepened a well at the bottom of the labyrinth—the real well was fitted with a greenscreen. In addition, the crew built a fairy throne room. "That was almost all CG," says Burrell. "Only the floor, a few pedestals and one door were practical."

To communicate with del Toro, the studio used its CafeSync tool, which is a QuickTime Java program. "We could upload QuickTime files to Guillermo," says Burrell. "He put them into a movie folder and then we could draw images and notes on top of the QuickTime files and save JPG images for reference."

Much of the studio's work centered on the characters. For the green stick bug, which appears in around 30 shots, an insect wrangler provided reference material. "The [CG] model is incredibly complex," says Burrell. "Each little plate, shell and wing had to be separate pieces, and there were four wings, two tiny ones at front and a big ones at back." Animators worked with one rig whether the bug crawled or flew.

For the fairies and the green stick bug, the crew used Softimage|XSI for modeling, Autodesk's Maya for rigging, animation, texturing and shading, Mental Ray for rendering and eyeon's Digital Fusion for compositing.

To create the stick bug's transformation into the green fairy, the crew mod-

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Pan's Labyrinth

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eled both creatures in Softimage|XSI and then used an XSI feature called ShrinkWrap to blend the models. "It's like a super high-end morph," says Burrell.

Capuchin monkeys guided work on the fairies, one red, one blue and a third, a metamorph from the stick bug, is green. "The green fairy looks like a little bald monkey, and acts a little like one, too," says Burrell. The blue and red fairies look similar, but because they aren't as smart as the green fairy, the crew gave them heavier brows and more ape-like performances. "The red and blue fairies are a little more out of control and fight more," he says. "The green fairy is more of an adult."

Although insects and animals from the real world provided physical reference, for animation inspiration del Toro and Burrell turned to effects master Ray Harryhausen. "We were both inspired by him as a child," says Burrell. "This is an homage to him." They looked, in particular, at Harryhausen's tiny, winged Homunculus from *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* and the Trog in *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger*, and adapted some of their mannerisms and poses for the fairies especially, less so for the stick bug.

"We tried to be as realistic as we could, but we also tried to get those Harryhausen moments," Burrell says. "The Homunculus and Trog are very curious. You see it in the way they move their shoulders, face and head. We tried to get that sympathetic curiosity across with our animation."

In addition to these digital creatures, CafeFX also helped del Toro create the two fantastical human creatures, Pan

and the Pale Man, both played by actor Doug Jones who also portrayed Abe Sapien in *Hellboy*. For Pan, Jones wore green stockings and walked on stilts; prosthetic goat legs attached to the backs of his legs followed along. Painters at CafeFX removed the actors' green legs and the stilts in post-production. "This was an

And we had 300 shots to render."

By rendering out numerous passes for each character, ambient, beauty, self-shadowing, ground passes and so forth, compositors could change lighting within Digital Fusion and help meet the studio's goal—to integrate the effects within the film and to move the story forward.

"The most satisfactory part of our work was that we weren't just doing effects," says Burrell. "We usually blow something up and create environments, but our characters were a huge part of this story."

Burrell calls the work a labor of love for CafeFX. "It was a big investment for us, a big step," he says. "But it was great working

idea Guillermo had," says Burrell. "The film had a small budget. We had to come up with a lot of creative solutions."

The studio also replaced Jones' green legs when he played the Pale Man, this time with CG legs. "He's skinny and emaciated," says Burrell. "We gave him skel-

etal legs from the waist down."

With critics raving about the results, that investment is proving its worth. "We've already gotten more work because of it," says Burrell. And that means we can certainly look for more fantastic effects

"The most satisfactory part of our work was that we weren't just doing effects. We usually blow something up and create environments, but our characters were a huge part of this story."

—Vfx supervisor Everett Burrell of CafeFX

etal legs from the waist down."

To integrate the characters into the live-action footage, CafeFX used the LightGen plug-in for HDR Shop to generate lights from HDRI images taken on location. "It sets up a Maya scene or Maya lights," says Burrell. "It's a little bit of a hack, but although Final Gathering looks great for stills, it takes forever to render.

from this small studio in the future. ■

Barbara Robertson is an award-winning journalist who specializes in vfx and CG technologies. If you have a suggestion for her, you can email her at barberson@animationmagazine.net.

Picturehouse releases *Pan's Labyrinth* in select U.S. theaters on December 29.

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Ain't Nothing Like a Hound Dog!

Unlikely friends from the 1981 feature kick up their heels in *The Fox and the Hound 2*. by Claire Webb

Get ready to kick up your heels for an animated country experience! Originally introduced in the 1981 Disney feature (directed by Ted Berman, Richard Rich and Art Stevens), unlikely friends Tod the fox and Copper, the spunky hound puppy, are back for more adventures in a new direct-to-DVD sequel this month.

In this new chapter, diva extraordinaire Dixie (voiced by Reba McEntire) leaves The Singin' Strays—a canine musical act with a banjo-picking owner Lyle (Jeff Foxworthy)—and Copper gets a shot to sing with the group and its talented leader Cash (Patrick Swayze). But Copper's time in the spotlight puts his friendship with Tod to the test when the young fox and a disgruntled Dixie realize they're not cut out for roles behind the scenes. After much scheming on the part of Tod and Dixie that results in disaster, everyone decides showbiz must be put aside and harmony must be restored between friends.

"We took part of the original feature—two friends who are not supposed to be friends with each other—and we took them out of their world and put them at a little county fair," says the film's director

Jim Kammerud (*101 Dalmatians II*, *Little Mermaid II*). "We were trying to make a story about young people and make a story for ourselves as well." He also stresses the importance of the central friendship, which is indispensable in both the original and the sequel.

With the incorporation of CG elements along with 2D, the animation in *Fox and the Hound 2* is vastly improved from the original film. Kammerud and his team took close to three years to produce the feature with the animation coordinated between the base of operations in Ohio and Toon City's studio in the Philippines. Kammerud expresses his initial reservations about the outcome of creating the animation so far away from home, but he adds that he's been very pleased with the outcome of the collaborative efforts.

The characters are done mostly in 2D, like the first film, and many of the backgrounds are animated in CG, which heightens the vibrancy of the rich autumn landscapes. "I didn't want to completely follow the color of the original because it was a little dark—sort of part *Bambi* and part *Aristocats*," explains Kammerud. The CG certainly does add another dimension to

Best Friends Forever. An excellent mix of 2D and CG animation, a strong voice cast led by Reba McEntire, Patrick Swayze and Jeff Foxworthy and music by Trisha Yearwood and Lucas Grabeel make Disney's *The Fox and the Hound 2* stand out in the sequel market.

the film which the director points out was used primarily in scenes to accentuate fun and motion like the fair rides and the carousel sequences. Although this mix of styles was at times challenging, the result breathes new life into the story.

As in the first film, the soundtrack plays an important role in the overall production. Kammerud, along with musical supervisor Kim Oliver, Matt Walker and noted composer Joel McNeely went back to bluegrass roots in Nashville, Tennessee to get a really authentic country sound in the music. They recruited Grammy-winning artists Reba McEntire and Trisha Yearwood as well as some of the greatest bluegrass players and songwriters to create original scores for the film. Kammerud explains that the music was one of most challenging aspects of the movie. "The movie features seven songs or so, and it's definitely the most music the department has ever had."

Although he has worked on many sequels before, the director adds, "This is the first one that I just generally like all the songs; and Reba and Trisha were just amazing and so fun the whole time!"

Even with all the musical highlights and jazzed-up animation, the heart and soul of *Fox and the Hound 2* is still its heartwarming story about a lasting friendship. Kammerud notes that he recognizes some of the criticisms aimed at the lucrative sequel market, but he maintains that there is a healthy audience for these titles. "A lot of these [titles] aren't as sacred say as a *Dumbo*, but it's fun to make these movies for kids." He reverts back to the simplicity of the sweet and earnest story of Copper and Tod that makes this film so fun and irresistible. "I think we hit it!" he proclaims enthusiastically. ■

Disney's *The Fox and the Hound 2* DVD is released on Dec. 12. Bonus features include a "Making of the Music" feature, interactive "Mutt Mix Master" game and the classic 1939 Disney animated short *Goofy and Wilbur*. [\$29.99]



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A Space Saga Gets a Second Act

Harmony Gold's *Robotech: The Shadow Chronicles* continues the epic story of the classic anime series. **by Patrick Drazen**

The animated series that seemed destined never to have a sequel finally has one in *Robotech: The Shadow Chronicles*. The original *Robotech*, the classic anime show which was actually three anime series pasted together, set the standard for post-*Star Wars* animated space operas. Now, a feature-length continuation of the epic is finally here, and we're glad to report, it's doing quite well. Winning Best Animated Feature honors at the International Horror and Sci-Fi Film Festival, and screenings in Cannes, Toronto, New York and Los Angeles, *Robotech: The Shadow Chronicles* brings the story back to life for a new generation of fans. FUNimation is slated to distribute the DVD in 2007 after a theatrical release.

It all began in 1982 in Japan as a series called *Super Dimensional Fortress Macross*, produced by the influential Tatsunoko animation studio, captured the imagination of mass audiences. In 1985, the series found a home in syndication in the U.S., where it was rechristened *Robotech*. It's an elaborate plot and a variety of moods, from the super-cuteness of pop singer Lin Minmei to the ill-fated love of Roy Fokker and Claudia Grant (an interracial couple at a time when American television still shied away from the subject) to the battlefield heroics of Rick Hunter and Lisa Hayes, hypnotized its audience. When the series ran out, distribution and production company Harmony Gold USA acquired two more Tatsunoko series,

Southern Cross and *Genesis Climber Mospeada*. These were rewritten to create a continuity (of sorts) in the story of alien invasion and personal drama.

Harmony Gold's creative director Tommy Yune says the idea of a sequel had been kicking around for years. *Robotech* left off with "the cataclysmic departure of the [invading alien] Invid and the mysterious disappearance of the expedition's stalwart leader, Admiral Rick Hunter. This unresolved cliffhanger had left fans hanging since 1985."

Yune points out, "It was very important for us to involve Tatsunoko once again when preparing to create a new show that was true to its anime roots. We were taking on quite a challenge with this new project and consulted extensively with Mospeada's original writer Kenji Terada (who had also worked on *Southern Cross*). In the end we were quite fortunate to have the talented Ford Riley come on board and help shape this complex storyline with all its depth into a tight and cohesive screenplay."

"Tight and cohesive" might have been the last words to apply to a story that not only stitched together three different television series but also the 1986 *Robotech* spinoff film *The Sentinels*, which was itself amplified by a series of comics and novels. In 2005 another series of comic books was begun to bridge *The Sentinels* and the new movie: *Prelude to the Shadow Chronicles* was drawn by Omar Dogan and co-written by Yune and Jason and John Waltrip.

Rather than try to re-create the "old school anime" look of the 1980s TV series, Yune turned to the modern ability to meld 3-dimensional and 2-dimensional computer animation almost seamlessly. "New animation will



feature a digital 2D/3D production process. Cel-shading algorithms and compositing technology has matured to the point where we can have the best of both worlds, incorporating the traditional look of anime cels seamlessly combined with cutting-edge CG mecha animation."

Much of the animation was by the Korean studio DR Movie, which also contributed to the original *Macross* saga by working on *Macross Plus*. Recognizing, however, that much of the current anime audience doesn't go back far enough to remember the original *Robotech* broadcasts, the film was written both to evoke the old series and to work as a stand-alone; Yune calls it "newbie-friendly."

Yune also reached back to secure some of the old voice talent; this wasn't too hard, since many had already worked on the 2002 videogame *Robotech: Battlecry*. Veterans include Tony Oliver, Richard Epcar, Greg Sengoff and Mike Sorich. Iona Morris, the voice of Claudia Grant in the original *Robotech*, provides the voice for Jean Grant (the similar name is no accident; the character is married to Claudia Grant's brother). The fresh faces include Chase Masterson as the android Janice, Yuri Lowenthal as Marcus and sci-fi icon Mark Hamill as Commander Taylor.

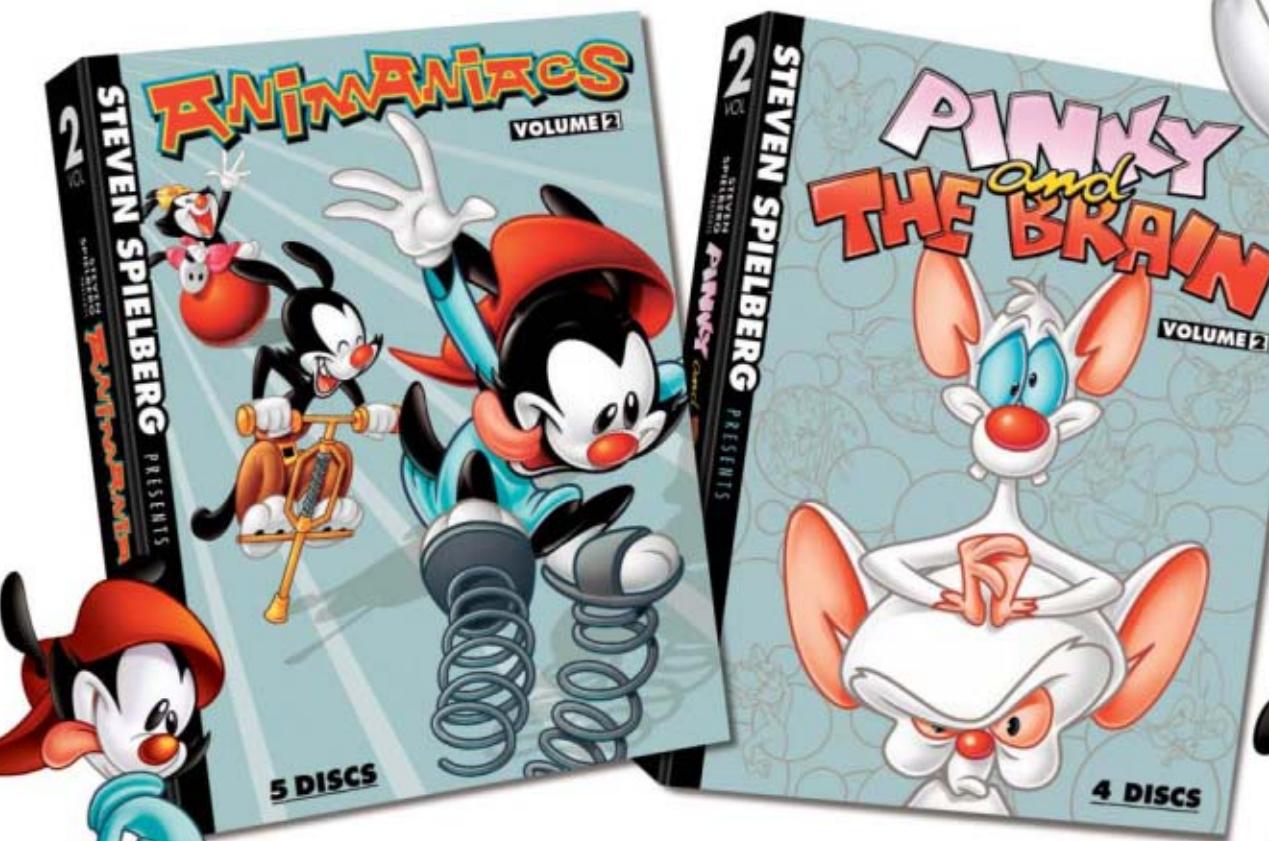
For the serious fans of *Robotech*, this movie is just the beginning: according to Yune, a 26-week TV series is also in the works! ■

For more info, visit www.robotech.com.

A Robotech Chronology

- 1985 *Robotech: The Macross Saga* (1919-2014)
- 1986 *Robotech II: The Sentinels* (2022-2044)
- 1986 *Robotech The Movie: The Untold Story* (2027)
- 1985 *Robotech: The Masters* (2029-2030)
- 1985 *Robotech: The New Generation* (2042-2044)
- 2006 *Robotech: The Shadow Chronicles* (2044)

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The Samurai Critic:

Reviews of the latest anime releases on DVD



Illustration by Pres Romanillos

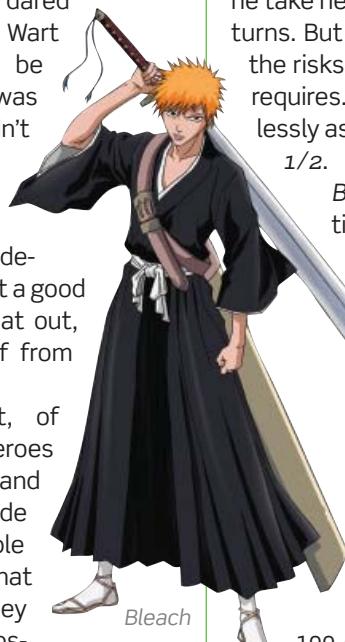
by Charles Solomon

Years ago, the great Disney storyman and children's book author Bill Peet told me, "For *The Sword in the Stone* I dared to change the legend: Wart was supposed to be Uther's son, who was born to be a king. I didn't like the idea that anyone was born to be a king. To inherit power whether you deserve it or not, was not a good message. So I left that out, and made him a waif from nowhere."

Peet was correct, of course. The best heroes are made, not born, and they're generally made when they stumble onto a challenge that brings out abilities they didn't know they possessed. The moody, hot-tempered heroes of the popular anime series *Bleach* and *Spiral* seem more like ordinary, sullen teen-agers than glorious warriors-to-be.

In *Bleach*, orange-haired high school freshman Ichigo Kurosaki seems odd instead of heroic. His nutty father attacks him unexpectedly to test his martial arts skills, and he has the unnerving ability to see dead people whose unresolved business on Earth prevents them from resting in peace. No wonder he has an attitude problem.

Ichigo can also see Rukia, a Soul Reaper whose job consists of slaying soul-devouring creatures called Hollows and ensuring the deceased find eternal repose with the Soul Society. When a ferocious, masked Hollow wounds Rukia in battle, she's forced to give her sword and much of her super-



Bleach

natural power to Ichigo. His latent spiritual powers make him a redoubtable stand-in Soul Reaper, and Rukia insists he take her place until her strength returns. But Ichigo doesn't want to face the risks and moral decisions the job requires. He and Rukia bicker as endlessly as Ranma and Akane in *Ranma 1/2*.

Bleach mixes an argumentative hero and heroine with well-staged sword-fights and supernatural adventures that may remind otaku of *Yu Yu Hakusho*. The series, which debuted earlier this fall on Cartoon Network's [adult swim] block, scored a big hit in Japan when it first aired on TV Tokyo in 2004. It ran for more than 100 episodes, and was followed by two OVA's and a theatrical feature. *Bleach* should find an equally enthusiastic following in the US.

An Unsolved Mystery

Since he was a child, Ayumu Narumi, the hero of *Spiral*, has been told he'll never match the achievements of his older brother Kiyotaka, a world-class pianist and detective. But Kiyotaka vanished when he began investigating the mystery of the "Blade Children" two years ago.

Since then, Ayumu has preferred to spend his time napping on the high school roof. He's stopped playing the piano, and although he's a talented chef, he cooks only for himself and his police detective sister-in-law, Madoka. But when mysterious accidents—and deaths—begin occurring at school, Ayumu is unwillingly drawn into the

mystery of the Blade Children. As he begins to explore the mystery, Ayumu reluctantly allies with bouncy school newspaper editor Hiyono, who maintains an information network J. Edgar Hoover would envy.

Ayumu and Hiyono find themselves caught between the Blade Children and the Hunters who have sworn to exterminate them. But Ayumu can handle any plot either side devises. By adhering to the principle, "the melody of logic always plays the notes of truth," he performs amazing feats of deduction, often at the last possible minute, when the stakes are very high.



Created by Kyou Shirodaira and Eita Mizuno, *Spiral* ran for 25 episodes (from Oct. 2002 through March 2003 on TV Tokyo), and director Shingo Kaneko manages to maintain the suspense to the last scene. Unfortunately, the series reaches an annoyingly inconclusive finale: the audience never discovers who or what the Blade Children are, why the Hunters are intent on destroying them or what became of Kiyotaka. Perhaps that was going to be revealed during a second season or in a later OVA. (The original manga *Suiru no Kizuna* (*Spiral Bonds of Reasoning*) ran for 15 volumes.) Yet, despite its weak ending, *Spiral* is a cracking good adventure. ■

Bleach Vol. 1—The Substitute

[Viz: \$24.98]

Spiral Box Set

[FUNimation: \$79.98, six discs]

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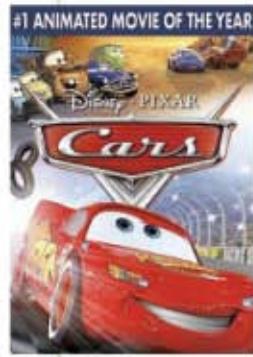
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Hot Discs

Four New DVDs to Get You Through Fruitcake Season
by Claire Webb

Cars [Disney, \$29.99]



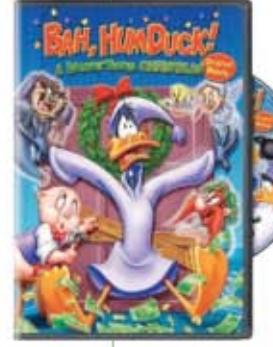
Vrooom, vrooom. That's the sound of director John Lasseter's shiny automotive comedy (co-directed by Joe Ranft) racing into DVD stores this month. One of the summer's biggest hits, *Cars* is a beautifully executed feature backed by stunning landscapes that revolves around a flashy stock car Lightning McQueen (voiced by Owen Wilson). Our hot-shot hero learns about

the real meaning of life and friendship from the charming four-wheeled inhabitants of the Southwest town of Radiator Springs. Paul Newman, Bonnie Hunt, Cheech Marin, Michael Keaton and George Carlin are a few of the top-notch voice stars. The DVD is accompanied by deleted scenes and a making-of interview with Lasseter who discusses his inspiration for his studio's seventh feature. In addition, you can check out all-new Pixar short *Mater and Ghostlight* (Larry The Cable Guy) and last year's delightful Oscar nominated short *One Man Band*. And if that isn't enough, you can also catch a glimpse of Brad Bird's upcoming flick *Ratatouille* (slated for the summer of 2007). Put the pedal to the metal to get your hands on this DVD.

[Release Date: Nov. 7]

Bah Humduck! A Looney Toons Christmas [Warner Home Video, \$19.98]

Scrooge has got nothing on Daffy Duck in the first made-for-video Looney Toons feature (well, they're calling it a feature, but it's only 44-minutes long). Directed by Charles Visser, this umpteenth version of Dickens' classic *A Christmas Carol* story is another one to add

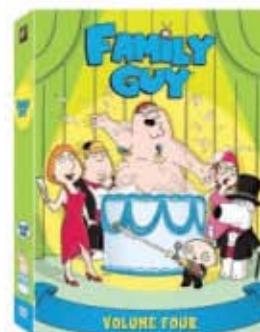


to the seasonal favorites list. In this update, Porky Pig, Marvin the Martian, Speedy Gonzales and Elmer Fudd—are employees at Luck-Duck mega-mart and fall victim to the evil ways of greedy boss, Daffy. Since he is consumed by thoughts of money during the holiday season, Daffy refuses to close the shop on Christmas and give his workers a much needed break. Now it is up to the ghost of Christmases Past (Granny and Tweety), Present (Yosemite Sam) and Future (Taz) as well as Bugs to save the holiday and open Daffy's eyes to the true meaning of Christmas. It's great to hear the voices of great pros such as Joe Alaskey, June Foray, Bob Bergen, Billy West and Dee Bradley Baker. This Warner Bros. animation project will have you singin' holiday tunes along with added audio tracks, bonus scenes and an interactive game. Bah Humduck, indeed!

[Release Date: Nov. 14]

Family Guy Vol. 4 [Fox, \$39.98]

For those avid fans disgruntled by the delay in the release of the last chunk of season four, the wonderfully dysfunctional Rhode Island family is back with comedic vengeance. This four-disc set features the second half of season four (the first half was released last year) with more of the same antics from the Griffin household. Peter, Lois, their two teens, wise-cracking dog and mutant baby show their family humor with just the right amount of pop-culture references in the fourteen episodes included in this volume. Episodes such as "Fat Guy Strangler", "The Father, The Son and the Holy Fonz" and "Petergeist", all accompanied with commentary by from series creator Seth McFarlane, make side-splitting



laughter inevitable when watching this collection of Family Guy. In addition, the set is chock-full of deleted scenes to entertain you into the wee hours as well as featurettes "Peter Shin Draws Stewie" and "A Tour of the Family Guy Offices", and optional uncensored audio track. This volume should definitely keep fans occupied until the release of season five.

[Release Date: Nov. 14]

Robin Hood: Most Wanted Edition [Disney, \$29.99]



You no longer have to wait for the Disney Channel to run this 1973 animated version of the philanthropic Sherwood Forest's hero, all set in the animal kingdom! Now you can own it on DVD in widescreen format with surround sound. Directed by Wolfgang Reitherman, *Robin Hood* is the tale of one man and his heroic band of men in their quest to rob from the rich and give to the needy. They seek to rid the people of the evil Sheriff Nottingham who levies unjust taxes on his subjects. The movie boasts an all-star voice cast that includes Brian Bedford, Phil Harris, Monica Evans and the late Sir Peter Ustinov. There are also deleted scenes and an alternate ending as well as an animated short *Ye Old Days* for your viewing pleasure. Although the movie may not compare to the features made when Disney was still alive, it still has its share of enjoyable moments and delightful characters. Toon connoisseurs will definitely realize that "The Phony King of England" sequence borrows animation from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *The Aristocats* and even from earlier in the movie itself! It ain't called the Most Wanted Edition for nothing!

[Release Date: Nov. 28]



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The Padded Cel

20 Years of Hard Labor: The Best and Worst in Animation Since 1986



by Robby London

TELEVISION

Animation Magazine is 20 years old this year. To put this in perspective, consider that it is older than most of our bosses. Okay, maybe that's a slight exaggeration. But it is true that any dog or cat that was disciplined by the sound of its owner palm-slapping a rolled-up copy of the very first issue of *Animation* ... is now dead. (Not in any way to imply a cause-and-effect relationship.)

Speaking of dead, take my animation career. It seems like only yesterday when it was in its infancy—20 years ago. And it seems like only a year later when it peaked—19 years ago. The coming sea changes were unimaginable back then. So, on the occasion of this publication's 20th Anniversary, let's acknowledge some of the best industry developments of these past twenty years. At the same time, we'll highlight some of the **WORST** and most disappointing events—strictly for instructional purposes, of course.

Mid 1980s:

Best: Waves of 65-episode toy-driven animated series launch the careers of literally hundreds of animation writers, artists and executives. **Worst:** Somebody actually has to watch these shows.

Late 1980s:

Best: The three-network hegemony—whose all-powerful despotic executives tormented, terrorized and tortured animation creators—is finally broken by the launch of new networks, both broadcast and cable. **Worst:** Suddenly there are even greater numbers of despotic network executives. And they discover “waterboarding.”

Early 1990s:

Best: *The Simpsons* takes off—big time! This shatters, once and for all, the prevailing myth that adults won't watch primetime

animation. **Worst:** *The Simpsons* ultimately leads to a wave of failed primetime animated series. If you remember *Capitol Critters*; *God, The Devil and Bob* or *Father Of The Pride* raise your hand. (Unless you're the one who programmed them, in which case just waive your unemployment check!)

Mid 1990s:

Best: Digital technology comes of age in

value. **Worst:** Animation employees don't “hold shares.” (We're too busy trying to figure out *The Matrix*.)

Early 2000s:

Best: Pixar leads a new golden age of 3D animated theatrical features, finally fulfilling the digital promise. **Worst:** Ageism and consolidation result in layoffs of the animation writers, artists and executives whose

careers were launched in the mid 1980s (see above). As thanks for years of service, studios offer terminated employees a *different kind of “digital promise.”* (Hint: it involves the second digit on the right hand.)

Mid 2000s:

Best: *Animation Magazine*, experiencing a renaissance of journalistic excellence accompanied by a renewed spirit of altruism, offers fading hack writer a shot at creative redemption. **Worst:** I've actually got to write one of these things every month. You think it's easy? YOU try it! (On second thought, please don't. I need redemption more than ever since my application to be adopted was turned down by Madonna.)

A serious *thank you and heartfelt congratulations* to *Animag* president Jean Thoren, publisher Jodi Bluth, editor-in-chief Ramin,

former editor and publisher Rita Street and all the other wonderful and creative people who have worked so hard over the years to bring us *Animation Magazine*. It's an honor to be even a tiny part of this legacy. (By the way, guys, I'll be sending my check in a little late this month.) ■

When he's not working on developing animated properties, Robby London flies Tom Cruise and his new bride to Planet Zeno in his spacious aircraft.



The Nine Lives of Fritz the Cat © Steve Krantz Prods.

the animation workplace. The arrival of the Internet is hailed as the “second coming of the industrial revolution!” **Worst:** Distractions of the Internet result in massive productivity decline and provide multiple second comings for pervert evangelists, Republican congressmen and future *Animation Magazine* columnists.

Late 1990s:

Best: “Go-Go 90s” culminates in a tsunami of media consolidation building “shareholder”



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Seeing Toons

A 12-year-old boy is visited by classic animated characters after getting brain surgery in the new Cartoon Network offering, *Re-Animated*. by Ramin Zahed

Question: Why would Cartoon Network produce a live-action movie about a 12-year-old boy who gets an emergency brain transplant? The answer has to do with whose frozen brain is used to save the kid during the operation. Our hero Jimmy ends up with the noggin of famous cartoonist Milt Appleday, which leads to him being visited (and, at times, harassed) by a bunch of animated characters. That means the movie (*Re-Animated*) gets to have all kinds of Roger Rabbit-type of fun with the intersection of the real world and Toon Town.

The movie is the brainchild of Adam Pava and Tim McKeon, veterans of *Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends* and *The Life & Times of Juniper Lee*. "The animated part of the show—which is done in Flash by L.A.-based

Renegade Animation—allows us to pay homage to all the classic cartoons," says McKeon. "Jimmy can see all these wonderful iconic characters ... that could've been around for 75 years. It's great to have this show on Cartoon Network because we try to reflect our love for the great characters in cartoon history."

As Michael Ouweleen, Cartoon Network's senior VP of programming and development, explains, "Adam and Tim write at the studio, and they are very familiar with our brand tone. We were exploring the potential of other media and formats, and they came up with this great idea which was a perfect fit for us although it's long-form and it mixes animation with live action."

There are numerous reasons the idea clicked with the folks at Cartoon Network.

Not only does the movie allow viewers to chuckle about characters in animation history and to enjoy the interaction between the main character and the goofy toons that visit him and cause all kinds of trouble, there are plenty of other offbeat elements. "There are some unexpected details," notes Ouweleen. "Jimmy's mom is an astronaut, his stepsister is a green-skinned alien, his classmate is 12-feet-tall and his dad is a seven-year-old trapped in a 40-year-old man's body. Everything is kind of twisted, but it's also about animation history."

The team at Glendale, Calif.-based Renegade Animation (*Hi Hi Puffy Ami Yumi*) was tapped about a year ago to create the show's retro animated cast which includes Golly and Dolly Gopher (Paul Reubens and Ellen Greene), Tux (Tom Kenny) and Crocco the Alligator (Brian Posehn). Having delivered numerous live action and animation hybrid TV ads and promo spots, they proved to be the perfect go-to studio for the movie.

As animation director Scott O'Brien explains, "Four years ago, we were still doing drawings and scanning them in. Flash tech-



Adding the Critters: The team at Renegade Animation added the Flash-animated characters after the live-action scenes were shot. Current technologies allowed the animators to draw the rough poses right on laptops as the scenes were being shot.



TELEVISION

nology was the reason why we were able to get the work done."

The animators first delivered storyboards for the movie, in hopes that the live action portion would follow the storyboards—well, things don't always work out that way in real life. Then large foam-board cutouts of the toons were put in the scenes so that the actors could interact with them. "Real eye contact is essential," says O'Brien. "We'd then draw the rough poses right on the plate. Characters were then put together in Flash, and then the compositing

What's important to remember is that Flash is a lovely, lovely tool, but it's the artists who use it and the pipeline that supports the work that's pushing the industry forward."

For O'Brien, it was important to emphasize that these animated characters belonged to previous eras. "We were trying to mimic some of the icons of the 1940s and '50s," he notes. "We looked at older school toons such as *The Three Caballeros* and revisited a lot of classic *Tom and Jerry* shorts. We didn't need a lot of shadows."

"I think that's when we're at our best—doing things we've never done before. You can't take the cartoon out of Cartoon Network, but that doesn't mean we're not evolving."

—Michael Ouweleen, Cartoon Network's senior VP of programming and development

department would combine the live-action footage with animation."

Renegade exec producer Ashley Postlewaite adds, "We did our first live action/animation mix for *Space Jam* and that was 15 years ago. To watch Scott working on his laptop, drawing right over the live-action scene that's being shot—that's amazing.

One of the film's highlights, according to O'Brien, is a sequence in which Jimmy is running through a park along with the animated characters. "The camera is panning the scene and you have Jimmy and Golly the Gopher running side by side—I think that particular scene really worked out well."

Overall, both O'Brien and Postlewaite are quite proud of the seamless work their 25-member team has done for the film. "There was such a positive vibe on the set," says O'Brien. "Everything seemed to really jell well together and we hope it all shows in the final product." Postlewaite agrees. "We think the concept really works for Cartoon Network. What kid wouldn't love the idea of being able to see cartoons. It also gives a nod to animation history and that's cool."

"It's one of the most ambitious, risk-taking projects Cartoon Network has done since creating *Adult Swim*," says Ouweleen. "I think that's when we're at our best, doing things we've never done before. What I can say to all of the critics who are worried about us not doing animated projects is that their hatred is immature! The folks at Renegade have done a lot of wonderful animation for this movie. You can't take the cartoon out of Cartoon Network. But that doesn't mean that we're not evolving—after all, the distinction between live action and cartoons is also evolving." ■

Re-Animated premieres on Cartoon Network at 8 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 8.



Bix Pix Takes a Holiday

Stop-motion studio starts a new tradition with *Holidaze*.
by Ryan Ball

For millions of people around the world, stop-motion animation has been part of the winter holiday tradition for as long as they can remember. Starting in the early '60s, producers Arthur Rankin and Jules Bass brought timeless Christmas stories to life by animating puppets one frame at a time, creating beloved specials such as *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* and *Santa Claus is Comin' to Town*, which are still broadcast on network television each year to huge ratings. In this tradition comes *Holidaze: The Christmas That Almost Didn't Happen*, a funny and charming new addition from Bix Pix Ent. and Madison Road Ent. The hour-long special is available on DVD at Wal-Mart stores and will air on ABC this month.

Holidaze is the story of Rusty Reindeer (voiced by Fred Savage), a young resident of the North Pole who is tired

of living in the shadow of his famous, red-nosed brother and longs to find his own place in the Christmas tradition. To this end, he sets out to the "Big City" in search of answers and stumbles into a support group attended by Candie the Easter Bunny (Gladys Knight), Cupid (Paul Rodriguez), Albert the Thanksgiving Turkey (Harland Williams) and a pair of Valley-girl Halloween ghosts Trick (Emily Osment) and Treat (Brenda Song). With the help of these new friends and a young boy who is losing faith in Santa, Rusty just might have what it takes to save Christmas, as long as he can avoid capture by a visually impaired dog-catcher.

The voice cast also includes Fred Willard (*Chicken Little*) as Santa Claus, Edie McClurg (*The Little Mermaid*) as Mrs. Claus and John O'Hurley (*Seinfeld*) as a serious thespian currently playing

the role of a department-store Santa. The show is directed by Bix Pix's Dave Brooks from a script by TV veterans Peter Murrieta and Jonathan Prince.

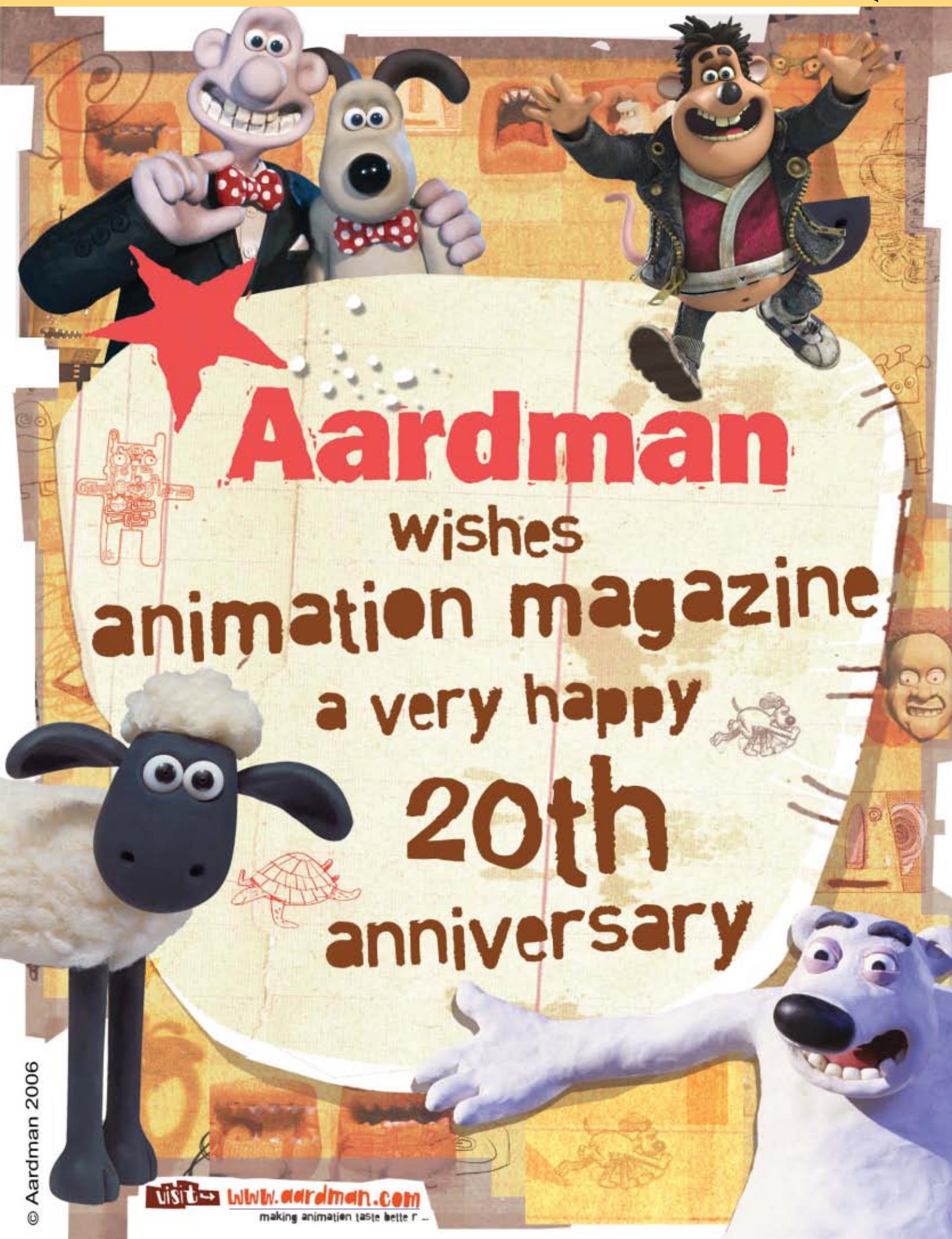


Kelly Bixler

Bix Pix was working with Madison Road on another project when studio founder Kelli Bixler pitched them on the idea of doing a package of animated holiday specials. Madison Road then brought on Prince, who also exec produced the first installment through his Once A Frog Prods. He came up with the idea of focusing on iconic holiday characters and he, Bixler and fellow exec producer Jak Severson set about developing a franchise.

With just six months to produce 60 minutes of animation, Bix Pix moved its operations from Chicago to Los Angeles and set up shop in a former art school in Sherman Oaks. In fewer than eight weeks they managed to build

continued on page 56



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Holidaze

continued from page 56

more than 120 puppets, which, if had not been built properly could cause a loss of time and limit creative movement. Bixler says the fabrication team did a stellar job, but the rush to deliver on time made for a somewhat rough start of filming. "When we looked at the first week of footage, we said, 'Whoa, we have to slow down and be cleaner,'" she says.

The time crunch required some of the more grandiose ideas to be scaled back, but Bixler says she's proud of the number of tracking shots and the quality of the lighting in the film. And while she would have liked the luxury of putting more movement and action on the screen, she also feels that the hurried pace of production brought a certain energy to the proceedings. "There's not any time to argue, you just gotta do it!" she comments. "Also, I think it put everybody in the same boat. Every single department was under the same deadline challenge."

In *Holidaze*, an elf character makes reference to Rankin and Bass's *Rudolph*, noting that his Uncle Herbie is a dentist. And while the animators at Bix Pix were very much inspired by the holiday classic, they brought a much more polished animation style to the



project, while retaining the unmistakable look and feel of stop-motion. Designed by Andrew Hodges, the puppets were cast in foam, some with metal ball-and-socket joints and others with aluminum wire armatures. The animation was shot by director of photography Christopher Warren with Cannon HD digital still cameras on elaborately constructed miniature sets with some forced-perspective camera tricks employed to make the world seem more expansive. According to Bixler, they wanted to get everything done in camera and avoid using green-screen setups and digital com-

positing tricks.

Bixler says she was thrilled to get such a great voice cast, and particularly enjoyed working with legendary songstress Gladys Knight, who didn't bring any diva attitude into the recording booth for her part as Candie the Easter Bunny. "When she came into the studio, she said, 'I'll do it the way you say I should do it. If I were doing a song, I'd tell you how I want to do it,'" Bixler recalls.

On DVD, *Holidaze* features 15 additional minutes of content, as well as bloopers and outtakes. The production is the first in a series of holiday specials Bix Pix and Madison Road plan to create. Albert the turkey, Candie the bunny, Cupid and the Halloween ghosts will each get their own chance to star in upcoming releases. Production on the Thanksgiving installment may start as early as next month.

If all goes as planned, the series will keep Bix Pix and a large percentage of Los Angeles' stop-motion community busy for quite a while, which is comforting considering just a few years ago stop-motion was all but declared dead with the rise of computer-generated animation. Just as Christmas needs to be saved by somebody at least once a year, traditional animation needs people like Bixler and crew to keep it viable in the digital age. ■

The Bix Mix: Although the new special focuses on Rusty the Reindeer and Christmas, Bix Pix and Madison Road are planning more holiday-themed stop-motion specials featuring Albert the turkey, Candie the bunny, Cupid and the Halloween Ghosts.



Bix Pix's *Holidaze* is available on DVD at Wal-Mart stores and will air on ABC on Dec. 9 at 8 p.m.



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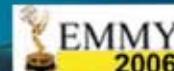
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CREATING IMAGES THAT MOVE TO THE RYTHM OF LIFE

Top 20 Toon Characters: Kids' Choice Edition!

Animated characters have ruled the hearts and minds of children for nine decades. Of course, Ignatz Mouse, Felix the Cat and Popeye the Sailorman hold no appeal to the new generation of kids, but it's good to know that old-timers like Bugs, Mickey and Casper continue to have some star appeal! To find out which characters were more popular with kids these days, we took an unscientific survey of eight- to ten-year-olds in Thousand Oaks, Calif. Not surprisingly, Steve Hillenburg's yellow absorbent charmer outranked everybody else by a mile. Here are the top 20 characters as voted by the helpful students in Mrs. Oppenheimer's fourth-grade class at Ladera Elementary School!

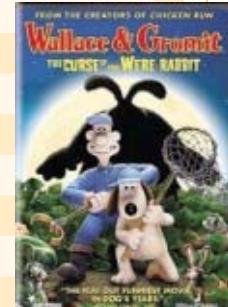
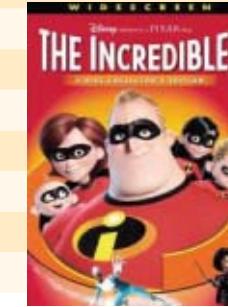
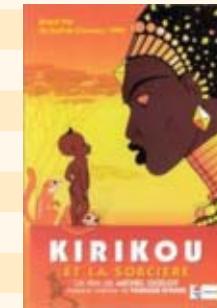
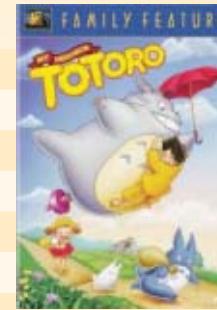
1. **SpongeBob SquarePants**
2. **Bart Simpson**
3. **Scooby-Doo**
4. **Fairly OddParents**
5. **Ed, Edd 'n' Eddy**
6. **Mickey Mouse**
7. **Grim, Billy and Mandy**
8. **Bugs Bunny**
9. **Avatar**
10. **Pixar's Cars**
11. **Kim Possible**
12. **Donald Duck**
13. **Tweety Bird**
14. **Nemo (*Finding Nemo*)**
15. **Casper the Friendly Ghost**
16. **Kronk (*Kronk's New School*)**
17. **Bloo and Mac (*Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends*)**
18. **Scrat (*Ice Age*)**
19. **Pokémon**
20. **Fantastic Four**



SPECIAL REPORT

20 Animated Movies You Must Already Own on DVD (1986-2006)

- An American Tale (Don Bluth, 1986)
- Who Framed Roger Rabbit? (Robert Zemeckis, 1988)
- The Little Mermaid (Ron Clements, John Musker, 1989)
- The Lion King (Roger Allers, Rob Minkoff, 1994)
- Akira (Katsuhiro Otomo, 1988)
- Beauty and the Beast (Gary Trousdale, Kirk Wise, 1991)
- My Neighbor Totoro (Hayao Miyazaki, 1988)
- The Nightmare Before Christmas (Tim Burton, 1993)
- The Iron Giant (Brad Bird, 1999)
- Toy Story I and II (John Lasseter, 1995 and 1999)
- Kirikou and the Sorcerer (Michel Ocelot, 1998)
- Shrek I and II (Andrew Adamson, Vicky Jenson, 2001; Adamson, Kelly Asbury, Conrad Vernon, 2004)
- Spirited Away (Hayao Miyazaki, 2001)
- Waking Life (Richard Linklater, 2001)
- Ice Age (Chris Wedge, Carlos Saldanha, 2002)
- Lilo & Stitch (Dean DeBlois, Chris Sanders, 2002)
- The Triplets of Belleville (Sylvain Chomet, 2004)
- The Polar Express (Robert Zemeckis, 2004)
- The Incredibles (Brad Bird, 2004)
- Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit (Nick Park, Steve Box, 2005)



20 TV Shows That Changed Our Toon Landscape (1986-2006)

- The Simpsons (Matt Groening, 1989)
- Rugrats (Arlene Klasky, Gabor Csupo, Paul Germain, 1991)
- The Ren & Stimpy Show (John Kricfalusi, 1991)
- Ed Edd 'n' Eddy (Danny Antonucci, 1991)
- Batman: The Animated Series (Bruce Timm, Eric Radomski, 1992)
- Beavis and Butt-head (Mike Judge, 1993)
- Pokémon (Satoshi Tajiri, 1995)
- Blue's Clues (Todd Kessler, Angela Santomero, Traci Paige Johnson, 1996)
- South Park (Matt Stone, Trey Parker, 1997)
- SpongeBob SquarePants (Stephen Hillenburg, 1999)
- Family Guy (Seth MacFarlane, 1999)
- Futurama (Groening, David X. Cohen, 1999)
- Aqua Teen Hunger Force (Matt Maiellaro, Dave Willis, 2000)
- The Fairly OddParents (Butch Hartman, 2001)
- Samurai Jack (Genndy Tartakovsky, 2001)
- Invader ZIM (Jhonen Vasquez, 2001)
- Kim Possible (Mark McCorkle, Bob Schooley, 2002)
- Teen Titans (Sam Register, Glen Murakami, 2003)
- Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends (Craig McCracken, 2004)
- Avatar: The Last Airbender (Michael DiMartino, Bryan Konietzko, 2005)





Boba Fett
Centaur
Davy Jones
Demon Baby



Dobby
E.T.
Hulk
Hungarian Horntail



Jack Sparrow
Roger Rabbit
Saphira
T-1000



T-Rex
The Mask
Tinkerbell
Tripod



Velociraptor
Watto
Worm Guy
Yoda

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- from all the characters at ilm



INDUSTRIAL
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Company Town: Animation & VFX House Milestones in 2007

Five-Year Anniversaries

Engine Room

The vfx house that gave us the killer theatrical teaser for last summer's *The Da Vinci Code* will be celebrating its fifth year of delivering cool eye candy in the fall. Founded and headed by Dan Schmit, the company recently moved to the Hollywood Center Studios and is currently working on the new F/X Network series *Dirt* as well



as the 3D horror flick *Scar*. "We have the most diverse client base around," says Schmit. "We also have the tools to conquer any production challenge. Our clients get this and come from every corner of the entertainment industry to collaborate. It makes our lives interesting!"

Website: www.engineeroomvfx.com

SPECIAL REPORT

FUNimation's Operation Anime

The folks at the anime powerhouse will be marking the fifth year of their Operation Anime program, which brings anime content for screenings to anime clubs at schools, public libraries and community groups across the U.S. The outfit boasts 1,370 clubs with a 43,000 membership. According to the company's spokesperson Jackie Smith, FUNimation attends over 25 Con events a year, reaching over 500,000 fans. Upcoming projects include the January launch of the new Spike TV toon *Afro Samurai*, starring Samuel L. Jackson, which will be out on DVD in March. The shop's founding branding *Dragon Ball Z* (all 270-plus episodes) will be digitally remastered, restored and released in February.

When asked to tell us the silliest thing they ever did, Smith says, "In our campaign to bring more *Fruits Basket* episodes to the U.S., we wanted the producer to understand how popular the series truly was here. So we challenged fans to send us a thousand paper cranes [symbols of peace] that we would then forward to Japan. Little did we know that we'd receive more than 10,000 paper cranes! We had to dedicate a whole office to those cranes alone!"

Website: www.funimation.com



Luxology

Luxology, the San Mateo, Calif.-based company behind the successful modo artist's tool, is also celebrating its fifth year in the business in '07. Founded by Stuart Ferguson, Allen Hastings and Brad Peebler (pictured), Luxology has people working on modo in five countries. "People said we were completely insane to start a new company and write applications from the ground up in this competitive, jam-packed market!" says current CEO and president Peebler. "Now that modo is out in the wild and artists all over the world are creating inspirational content, we think we have made our point! Artists do care about workflow and ease of use. Our attention to the little details as well as pouring in a ton of technology has proven to be just what the market needed!"



So what is their secret of the company's success? "We have a delicious blend of talented engineers, passion, a touch of insanity and a genuine simpatico with our end users. Community, community, community! We have the best!" We also love their out-of-house slogans "Create at the speed of thought" and "You are not a number!" AND the fact that they consider Snoopy their role model! And if you're a fan already, you'll be happy to know that they will release modo 301 in 2007! Huzzah!

Website: www.luxology.com



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Sony Pictures Animation

This May will mark the fifth anniversary of the launch of Sony Pictures Animation. It's been great fun to see the creation of this state-of-the-art toon studio in Culver City, Calif., and wonderful to see its first feature-length release *Open Season* (directed by Roger Allers, Jill Culton and Anthony Stacchi) receive strong reviews and perform nicely at the box office in 06. Founded by Yair Landau, president of Sony Pictures Digital Entertainment, the toon division is led by industry veterans Sandra Rabins and Penney Finkleman Cox. The studio will release its second feature *Surf's Up*, directed by Ash Brannon and Chris Buck, a behind-the-scenes "documentary" toon about the Penguin World Surfing Championship competition, in the summer. Then, there's the adaptation of the children's book *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*, which will be directed by Phil Lord and Chris Miller (*MTV's Clone High*).

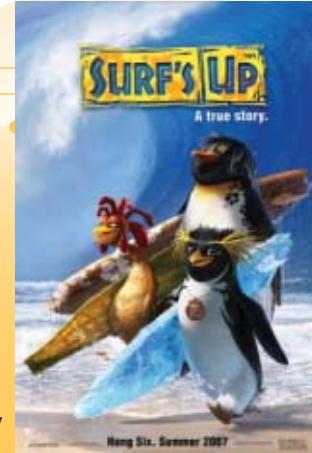


Also in the busy CG production pipeline is *Hotel Transylvania*, to be directed by David Feiss (*Open Season*, *Cow and Chicken*) and Anthony Stacchi (*Open Season*, *Antz*). This kooky monster movie will

visit Dracula, the Wolf Man and other classic creeps, who all hang out together and try to cope with the notion that they are no longer relevant in modern times.

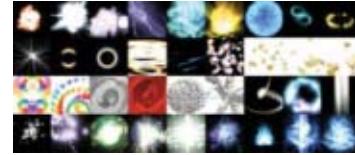
As SPA excellent spokesman Jerry Schimtz tells us the in-house slogan is "story, story, story!" One thing's for sure: It's going to be great fun to see this new kid in town grow, evolve and entertain us with more top-notch movies in the years ahead.

Website: www.imageworks.com



wondertouch

In June 2002, Alan Lorence started a software development company called wondertouch in Madison, MO, which has changed the way artists create particle effects. Particleillusion, the shop's award-winning tool has opened new doors to both vfx pros and amateur artists. The clever folks at the company tell us that their biggest role models are "any programmer, artist or producer who has ever added any type of CG explosion to a videogame, TV show or movie, especially where it really wasn't necessary or even made sense



to put one!" Next up for the company are particleillusion AE (After Effects plug-in) and particleillusion 3.5. We can't wait to see what Alan and his buddies come up with in the next five years!

Website: www.wondertouch.com

Ten-Year Anniversaries

ACME Animation



It's been almost a decade since Dave Master decided to create a network that would allow world-class animation pros to offer instruction and advice to high school animation students and enthusiasts. His wonderful brainchild, The ACME Network, has placed hundreds of animators working in the industry and taught thousands of visually literate aficionados about the art from.

Dave tells us that the best thing the program did was to learn from the elements that resulted in the success of his Rowland High School Animation program and provide them as utility for a growing community of enterprising teachers and enthusiastic students from the inner cities to rural outposts.

Their next project is a cross-cultural ACME Online pilot which will connect young students in the favelas of Brazil to kids in the U.S. to share their animation projects, with mentoring from animation pros in both countries.

Website: www.acmeanimation.org



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ANIMATION
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ANNIVERSARY

Amberwood Entertainment

PBS viewers who enjoy this holiday season's live-action/CG mix special *The Snow Queen* will get a good idea of the cool things this Ottawa-based shop has been up to lately. Founded by Sheldon S. Wiseman in 1997, the shop's most famous animated show is *The Secret World of Benjamin Bear*, which has been sold in over 80 territories.

Amberwood's other well-known toons include *Zeroman*, *Hoze Houndz*, *Katie & Orbie* and *Under the Umbrella Tree*, many of which were commissioned by Canada's Family Channel and Teletoon. Kids can also look forward to projects *RollBots*, *Rob the Robot* and *Debra the Zebra* in future years. Wiseman says he has stayed in this unpredictable business because "We love providing the world with quality children's programming made in Canada."

Website: www.amberwoodentertainment.com



Amberwood ENTERTAINMENT

TOKYOPOP

L.A.-based manga powerhouse TOKYOPOP will hit the big one-0 in 2007. Founded by Stu Levy, the company has had a huge impact in bringing the influential Japanese comic-book revolution to hungry American readers. The publishing entity also branched out to the TV toon and DVD arenas with titles such as *Reign: The Conqueror* and *Rave Master*.

Under the leadership of Levy and company president John Parker, the house which began modestly a decade ago with a line of volumes has now expanded to numerous original titles as well as comic-book versions of American favorite such as *SpongeBob SquarePants*, *Shrek* and *Family Guy*.

In 2006, TOKYOPOP began a co-venture with HarperCollins and launched a new website which allowed fans to create blogs, post artwork, videos and manga. Also in the pipeline are the company's first *Manga Movies* animated shorts, new digital content such as iManga and feature films such as *Lament of the Lamb*.

And what does keep the crew at TOKYOPOP inspired? "Our passion for artists, for audiences, for storytelling and bringing the world together," says the shop's public relations diva Susan Hale. Here's to another great decade for the enterprising company.

Website: www.tokyopop.com



15-Year Anniversaries

Renegade Animation

If you've ever seen an episode of *Hi Hi Puffy Ami Yumi* or admired some of the awesome live-action/animated commercials for Target, Cheetos or station ID spots for Cartoon Network and Boomerang, then you are quite familiar with the awesome work delivered by the boffins at Glendale, Calif.-based Renegade Animation.

Founded by Darrell Van Citters and Ashley Postlewaite, the studio will be releasing its first animated feature in the near future. Directed by Robert Zappia, *Who Stole Santa's Sack?* has lined up a top-notch list of voice actors. On the TV front you can catch the work they did for Cartoon Network's new toon/live-action hybrid project *Re-Animated* in December.

When we asked them to tell us something nobody can guess about Renegade, they wrote "The founders aren't married to each other ... and never were!" They also site "anyone who has ever started a business and stayed in it longer than five years" as their role models! Since they will be celebrating their 15th anniversary in 2007, they definitely know what they're talking about!

Website: www.renegadeanimation.com



DQ Entertainment

Ten years Ago, Tapaas Chakravarti founded his lucrative state-of-the-art animation studio DQ

Entertainment in Hyderabad, India. In recent years, the studio has worked on acclaimed animated series such as *Delta State*, *Curious George*, *Todd World* and *Tutenstein*, as well as the *Choose Your Own Adventure* DVD feature for Mike Young Productions and Forward Media. Along the 2D/Flash projects, DQ has also kept a healthy CG pipeline, working on prestigious toons such as *Skyland*, *Donkey Ollie*, *Mikido* and *Barbie Diaries*.

Picked by *Red Herring* magazine as one of the top 100 private companies in the world, DQE has over 2500 permanent employees and 500-plus contract jobs out of its Hyderabad and Far East locations. The studio recently added a new gaming division and expanded its capacity for 3D features to better accommodate the needs of the latest gaming devices and titles. DQ also launched a joint venture with France's Onyx Films and bought a strategic stake of up to 20 percent in Method Films. We wish the very best for Tapaas and his multi-national corporation which is fast becoming one of the key players in the global toon and gaming business. What a way to go in only one decade of operation!

Website: www.dqentertainment.com

The Visual Effects Society

"We are not geeks, just ask our other halves!" That's what the hard-working folks at the Visual Effects Society want the world to understand! Founded ten years ago by Tom Atkin, this effective organization has been putting on the glitzy VES Awards ceremony since 2003. This February, they'll be upping the glam factor even more as the ceremony will be taking place at the Kodak Grand Ballroom.

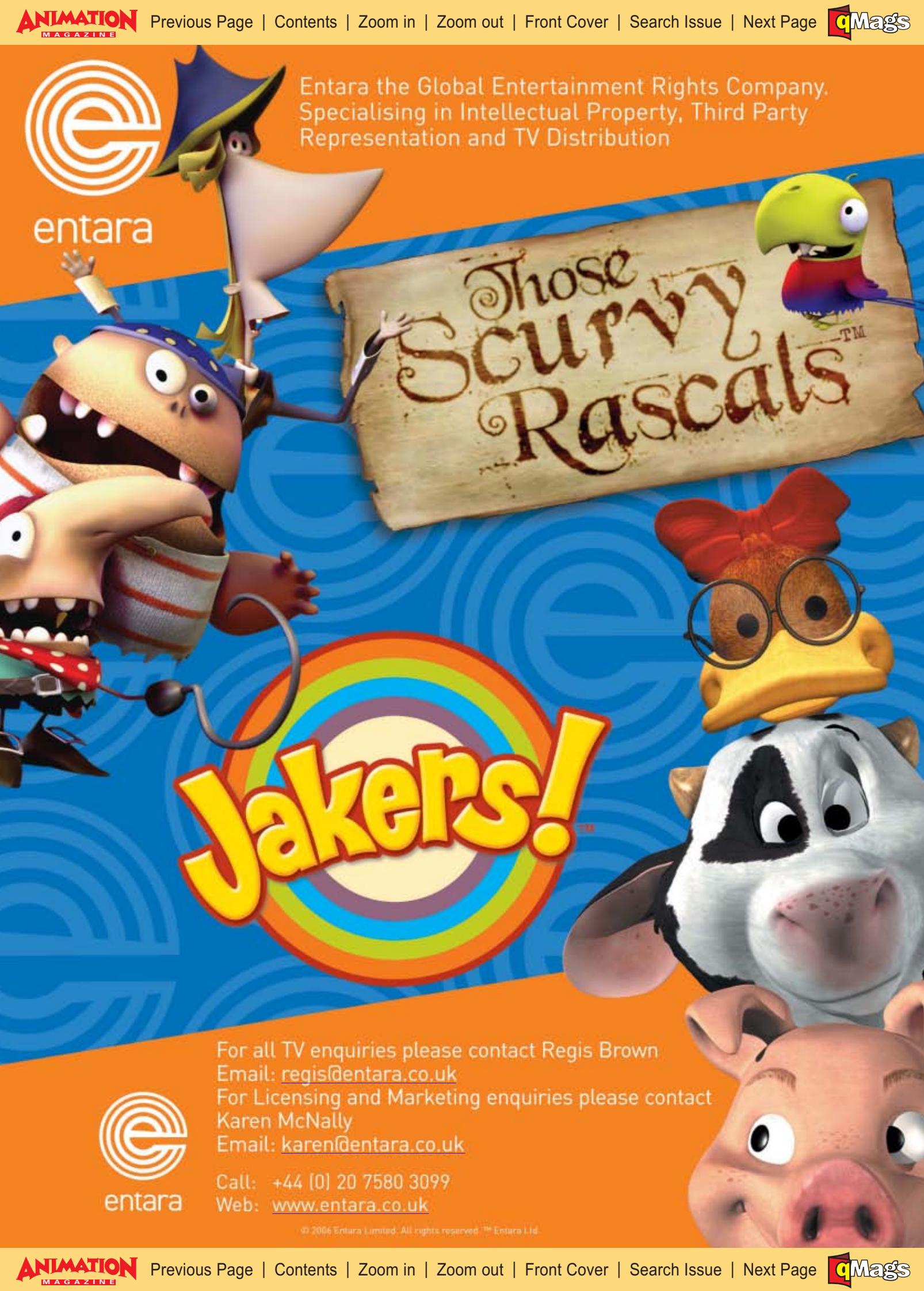
They tell us that they're proud of "creating a sense of community and camaraderie for our 1500 members worldwide." And the reason they keep going is "because we love it ... and we are crazy!" Truer words were never spoken! Keep up the great work, folks!

Website: www.visualeffectssociety.com



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Cuppa Coffee

With a name like Cuppa Coffee, it's not surprising that the slogan for Adam Shaheen's hopping toon house is "Good animation, bad coffee!" Established in 1992, the Toronto-based company has given us many reasons to love them throughout the years. Renowned toons such as Playhouse Disney's *Jo Jo's Circus* to MTV's *Celebrity Deathmatch* and *Bruno* have been keeping the shop quite busy and popular recently.

Next up for the house is a 26 x 11-minute spin-off series featuring everyone's favorite Flash monkey, Bruno. The in-house animators are also working on *Rick and Steve (The Happiest Gay Couple in the World)*, the new series for MTV's sister channel LOGO, a new season of *Deathmatch* and E! Network's *Starveillance*.

Among the many feathers in their cap is *The Adventures of Sam Digital*, an award-winning short (for Nick's Short Films by Short People) conceived and written by an 11-year-old student.

We asked them to tell us about their silliest thing they ever did. "On a lark, we rebuilt a stock car and entered into a country fair demolition derby. Unfortunately, come derby time, we couldn't get the car out of reverse! We did, however, win best-looking car, which is really the most important category for an animation and design house!"

Shaheen says he and his team "got into the business because we love what we do ... and it's stayed that way for 15 years." Good thing we all love what they do as well.

Website: www.cuppacoffee.com

20-Year Anniversaries

Blue Sky Studios

It would be quite difficult to find someone who hasn't instantly fallen in love with Scrat, the nut-hording critter from the *Ice Age* movies (and the star of the Oscar-nominated short *Gone Nutty* and this year's *No Time for Nuts*). Director Chris Wedge and the studio that gave us this delightful pop culture hero will be turning 20 this February—and judging by the list of the shop's top-caliber projects in the next few years, there are no signs of dark clouds for Blue Sky.

After rising from the ashes of MAGI/Synthanvision, the White Plains, New York-based studio broke into features when MTV hired it to create the creepy cockroaches in *Joe's Apartment*. Using its proprietary software, the studio produced over 200 spots for clients such as Chrysler, M&M, General Foods and Texaco. As the result of the acquisition by 20th Century Fox, Chris Wedge and this talented crew gave us the stunningly animated Oscar-winning short *Bunny*, which was only an appetizer for the Oscar-nominated 2002 feature *Ice Age*.

Next up for Wedge and co-director Carlos Saldanha was the great-looking 2005 feature *Robots* which made over \$128 million at the U.S. box office alone, which was followed by the biggest animated blockbuster of '06, *Ice Age: The Meltdown*. With much-anticipated CG-animated features such as *Horton Hears a Who!* and *Ice Age 3* planned for 2008 and *Fox Dogs* for 2009, we know the sky's the limit for this shop of wonders.

Website: www.blueskystudios.com

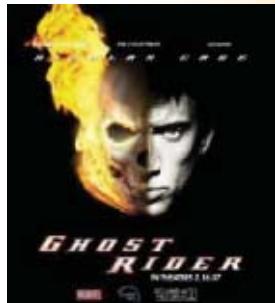
Sony Pictures ImageWorks

Under the sharp eye and astute leadership of president and CEO Tim Sarnoff, SPI has become one of the most influential CG operations in the world in the past 15 years. The shop that gave us the space shuttle rescue sequence in *Superman Returns* and the completely CG-animated Doc Ock in *Spider-Man 2*.

sony pictures
imagineWORKS

"The best thing we ever did was to

identify character animation as an essential component of our business," says SPI's spokesperson Don Levy. "Every project we've done exemplifies that, from the spectacular clock tower/subway fight in *Spider-Man 2* to the tiniest tuft of fur in *Open Season*."



The new year will see more cool SPI signature razzle dazzle sequences in features such as *Ghost Rider* (February), *Spider-Man 3* (May), *Surf's Up* (June), *Beowulf* (November). Come Oscar time, we're sure we'll have several of the studio's handiwork duking it out for the Golden Boy. So, to all the talented folks working over at the lot on Culver, keep 'em coming. We've got our eyes on you.

Website: www.sonypictures.com/imagineWORKS



20TH Anniversary



Junior



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of professionalism, entertainment
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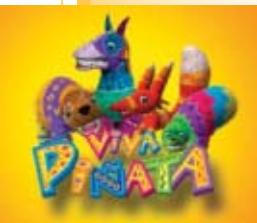
Bardel Entertainment

"The best thing about working in animation are the fantastic people working in it and seeing great ideas come to life," says Barry Ward, the man who co-founded Vancouver toon house Bardel, along with his wife Delna Bhesania 20 years ago. Back in the 80s, Bardel's staple work came from commercials and series, but by 1995, it had transitioned to A-list features such as Warner Bros.' *Space Jams*, Don Bluth's *Anastasia* and a solid relationship with DreamWorks for all of its 2D films.

In 1999, Barry and Delna opened Bardel Entertainment to develop and produce their own properties such as *The Christmas Orange* and the popular adaptation of Kenneth Opel's *Silverwing* books (which has been edited into three 72-minute movies on DVD and VHS). In 2004, they also delivered the fantasy project *Dragons: Fire and Ice* on DVD.

Barry says the most difficult part of running a top-notch studio these days is finalizing the deal. But that hasn't stopped their brilliant team from working on some amazing projects. Next up is *Los Camperones*, a Flash-animated feature produced by the creators of *Mucha Lucha!*, Eddie Mort and Lili Chin, and the *Edgar and Ellen* series, the hilarious 2D series produced with Star Farm, which is coming to Nickelodeon in 2007. Bardel is also busy working on the 4Kids shows *Viva Piñata* and *Chaotic*. We just know these guys will continue to raise the bar in their next two dynamic decades.

Website: www.bardelentertainment.com



Side Effects

Side Effects Software was born in 1987 when Greg Hermanovic and Kim Davidson began working with the PRISMS software acquired from Omnibus, the largest computer animation company at the time. Today, the company is best known for Houdini, its



award-winning procedural 3D animation software, which allows both professionals and beginners to create sophisticated effects by simply stringing together nodes. Davidson, the current president and CEO, says putting their procedural architecture at the center of all Side Effects products to give customers essential flexibility is the best thing the company has ever done. They say the worst thing they ever did was push a quarter-of-a-million-dollar SGI ONYX computer across a busy street for SIGGRAPH 94. The company is currently working on Houdini 9, a major milestone that promises to dramatically improve user interaction and workflow.

Website: www.sidefx.com

Rhythm & Hues

Looking back at the list of the movies this award-winning visual effects house has worked on since its creation in 1987 by six former employees of Robert Abel and Associates is like reading a list of the best vfx pics of the past two decades. Although the studio is best known of its Oscar-winning work on George Miller's 1995 talking-pig movie *Babe*, it has dazzled audiences with its uncanny handiwork in projects as wide-ranging as those famous Polar Bear spots for Coke, GEICO's Gecko ads, *Batman Forever*, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Scooby-Doo*, *Cats and Dogs* and *Stuart Little*.

In 2006 alone, R&H's clients included *Garfield 2: A Tale of Two Kitties*, *X-Men: The Last Stand*, *The Lake House*, *Superman Returns*, *The Fast and The Furious: Tokyo Drift*, *Happy Feet*, *Charlotte's Web* and *A Night at the Museum*.

Led by vfx pioneer John Hughes, the L.A.-based studio has proven its ability to produce dynamic effects that push the status quo in motion pictures. In 2005, Andrew Adamson's remarkable epic *Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* owed a huge portion of its success to the team at R&H. Not surprisingly, the Academy recognized their top-notch work with another Oscar nomination.

When we asked them to tell us something nobody knows about them, company spokesperson Scot Byrd wrote, "Talking animals are fun, but it's not all we do!" We're sure moviegoers will be oohing and aahing over R&H's next two big projects in 2007, *Evan Almighty* and *His Dark Materials: The Golden Compass* will agree with Byrd.

Website: www.rhythm.com



The Right Stuf

CEO Shawne Klecker and his team at Grimes, Iowa-based The Right Stuf have been delivering English-lingo versions of hot anime titles to U.S. audiences since 1987. The company's first title was none other than Osamu Tezuka's *Astro Boy* (circa 1963), which was a childhood favorite of the company founder Rob-

ert Ferson. The initial VHS cassettes of the show debuted in 1989, and in 2006, the company released two *Ultra Collector's Edition* box sets of the series with fully restored video and bonus footage previously unavailable in the U.S. According to Klecker, few people know that Right Stuf was initially founded to purchase and sell telescopes—thus, the name! He also sites Tezuka, the "father" of anime and manga, as his role model "for his creativity and innovative spirit." He tells us that the best thing they did was to partner with a great dubbing studio, Headline Sound, for their English-language dubs. And the most dubious thing? "Sublicensing our DVDs to other people instead of just doing them ourselves!—Needless to say, we don't do that anymore!" Aah, the sweet wisdom of hindsight!

Website: www.rightstuf.com



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25-Year Anniversaries

Chiudo Brothers

Perhaps best known for writing, directing and creating the creature effects for the sci-fi cult classic *Killer Klowns from Outer Space*, brothers Stephen, Charles and Edward Chiudo have been making films since they were kids and have spent the last 25 years creating memorable visual effects for film and television.

Recent accomplishments include providing stop-motion animation for the Will Ferrell holiday movie *Elf*, and marionette puppetry for the feature film *Team America: World Police* from *South Park* creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone. They've also produced stop-motion segments for Fox's *The Simpsons* and have supplied effects for such leading filmmakers as Tim Burton, Sam Raimi and Paul Verhoeven. This fall, the brothers released their first children's book, *Alien Xmas*, which they plan to make into a stop-motion animated feature. On an interesting note, up-and-coming rock band The Chiudos (Chi-oh-dose) named themselves after the Chiudo (Kee-oh-do) brothers because they're such big fans of *Killer Klowns*.

Website: www.chiodobros.com



S4C

The Welsh Fourth TV authority recently marked its 25th anniversary. This public service broadcasting station covers all of Wales and focuses on the needs of the Welsh-speaking population. The company's areas of activities include distribution, co-production and multi-media. Back in 92, S4C initiated a long-term policy aimed at producing quality animation for television.

"S4C is committed to developing a range of creative animation projects across different genres and for multi-platform use, from short promotional trails which can be zapped to mobile phones to prime-time programming," says Meirion Davies, S4C's Commissioning Editor Entertainment. "We look forward to working alongside the talented teams at the successful companies."



Calon is currently in production on S4C's new animated pre-school series, *Hana's Helpline* a co-production with Five and Germany's ZDF with support from the EU's Media+ program and the National Assembly for Wales. Griffilms is also working on a 30-minute animated film based on the Welsh legend of Gelert for S4C's 2007 holiday schedule, and Dinamo is producing *CWM Teg*, a series of 20 five-minute nursery rhymes for the broadcaster. Other new S4C toons include *Happy Valley* and *Where's My Dinner*.

Website: www.s4c.co.uk

35-Year Anniversaries

BRB Internacional

Forget the ditty about the rain in Spain. The real news coming out of the beautiful country is the Madrid-based BRB Internacional which will be celebrating its 35th year in the business in 2007. As Carlos Biern, the company's charming director of development and sales recalls, "I was born at the same time as the company I work for, which was founded by my father Claudio in Madrid! I guess 1972 was the year all his troubles began!" he jokes! Biern senior is still the company president and CEO and Javier Robles de Acuna is the current CEO.



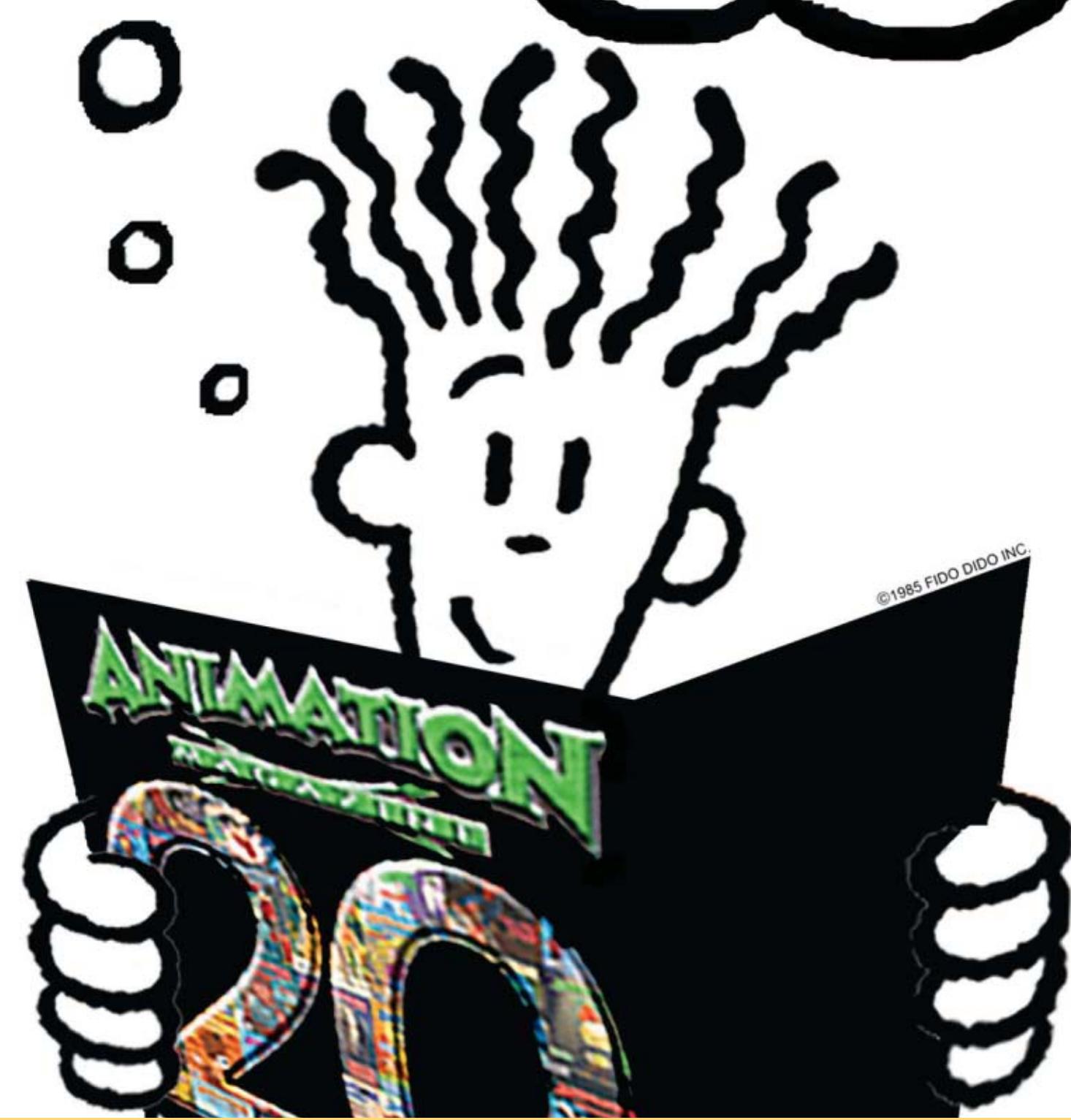
Among the studio's greatest hits from the past couple of decades are *David the Gnome*, *Dogtanian* and *Willy Fog*. In 2005, the shop added the shows *Papawa*, *Iron Kid* and *The Invisible Man* to its list of hits, followed by *Bernard*, a huge international sensation which follows the misadventures of an accident-prone CG-animated polar bear. This past year has also been a prosperous one, as the shop introduced *Angus and Cheryl* at TV markets, a delightful show about the never-ending battles and differences between boys and girls. BRB also had the smarts to develop *The Imp*, a hilarious new short-format series that is ideal for new platforms and won the Licensing Challenge at the MIPCOM Junior event in October. "It's a delicious comedy, packed with high-calorie evil!" notes Biern.



So what is the little fact nobody can guess about the studio? "Despite being such an old company, we try to innovate on every single project we get started. We work as a team ... and think four years in advance!" We think there's only one Spanish word that describes this sensational studio: *maravilloso!*

Website: www.brbes.com

jeanius!



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Top 20 Grossing Animated Movies

Rank	Film (Year)	Studio	\$ Domestic Total	\$ Foreign
1.	Shrek 2 (2004)	DreamWorks	\$600,788,188	\$479,439,411
2.	Finding Nemo (2003)	Buena Vista	\$339,714,978	\$524,911,000
3.	The Lion King (1994)	Buena Vista	\$328,541,776	\$455,300,000
4.	Shrek (2001)	DreamWorks	\$267,665,011	\$479,439,411
5.	The Incredibles (2004)	Buena Vista	\$261,441,092	\$369,995,000
6.	Monsters, Inc. (2001)	Buena Vista	\$255,873,250	\$269,493,347
7.	Toy Story 2 (1999)	Buena Vista	\$245,852,179	\$239,163,000
8.	Cars (2006)	Buena Vista	\$244,082,982	\$216,899,000
9.	Aladdin (1992)	Buena Vista	\$217,350,219	\$286,700,000
10.	Ice Age 2 (2006)	Fox	\$195,330,621	\$451,833,448
11.	Toy Story (1995)	Buena Vista	\$191,780,865	\$170,162,503
12.	Ice Age (2002)	Fox	\$176,387,405	\$206,871,808
13.	The Polar Express (2004)	Warner Bros.	\$173,675,955	\$124,100,000
14.	Beauty and the Beast (1991)	Buena Vista	\$171,350,553	\$206,000,000
15.	Tarzan (1999)	Buena Vista	\$170,742,341	\$277,100,000
16.	A Bug's Life (1998)	Buena Vista	\$162,798,565	\$200,600,000
17.	Shark Tale (2004)	DreamWorks	\$160,861,908	\$202,668,288
18.	Over the Hedge (2006)	Paramount	\$155,019,340	\$175,678,100
19.	Who Framed Roger Rabbit? (1988)	Buena Vista	\$154,112,492	\$173,351,588
20.	Lilo & Stitch (2002)	Buena Vista	\$145,771,527	\$127,349,813



Top 20 Grossing VFX-Driven Movies

Rank	Film (Year)	Studio	\$ Domestic Total	\$ Foreign
1.	Titanic (1997)	Paramount	\$600,788,188	\$1,244,246,000
2.	Star Wars: Ep. IV (1977)	Fox	\$460,998,007	\$314,400,000
3.	E.T. (1982)	Universal	\$434,974,579	\$357,800,000
4.	Star Wars: Ep. I (1999)	Fox	\$431,088,295	\$493,229,257
5.	Pirates of the Caribbean 2 (2006)	Buena Vista	\$423,032,628	\$641,055,000
6.	Spider-Man (2002)	Sony Pictures	\$403,706,375	\$418,002,176
7.	Star Wars: Ep. III (2005)	Fox	\$380,270,577	\$469,727,028
8.	LoTR: Return of the King (2003)	New Line	\$377,027,325	\$741,861,654
9.	Spider-Man 2 (2004)	Sony Pictures	\$373,377,893	\$410,180,516
10.	Jurassic Park (1993)	Universal	\$357,067,947	\$557,623,171
11.	LoTR: The Two Towers (2002)	New Line	\$341,786,758	\$584,500,642
12.	Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (2001)	Warner Bros.	\$317,575,550	\$658,900,000
13.	LoTR: Fellowship of the Ring (2001)	New Line	\$314,776,170	\$556,592,194
14.	Star Wars: Ep. II (2002)	Fox	\$310,676,740	\$338,721,588
15.	Star Wars: Ep. VI (1983)	Fox	\$306,169,255	\$165,800,000
16.	Independence Day (1996)	Fox	\$306,169,255	\$510,800,000
17.	Pirates of the Caribbean (2003)	Buena Vista	\$305,413,918	\$348,500,000
18.	The Chronicles of Narnia (2005)	Buena Vista	\$291,710,957	\$453,073,000
19.	Star Wars: Ep. V (1980)	Fox	\$290,271,960	\$247,900,000
20.	Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (2005)	Warner Bros.	\$290,013,036	\$602,200,000

Source: EDI FilmSource/ Variety

With friends like these, they don't need enemies!

George & ALFRED

I want to
congratulate Animation Mag
on 20 great years.

As usual,
too little too late.

Drats...

But I wanted
to do that.

CONGRATULATIONS
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Tel: + 33(0)1 43 45 55 44

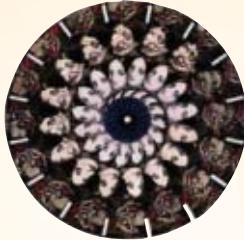
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CANAL+

Toon Town Milestones: The 2007 Edition

175 Years Ago

Belgian physicist Joseph Plateau and his sons introduce the **Phenakistoscope**, an early animation device which was the predecessor to the zoetrope.



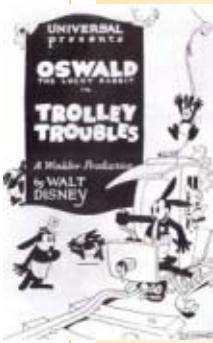
95 Years Ago

Animation pioneer **Winsor McCay** delights audiences with his *How a Mosquito Operates*.



80 Years Ago

Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks' new animated character **Oswald the Lucky Rabbit** makes his debut in the short *Trolley Troubles*.

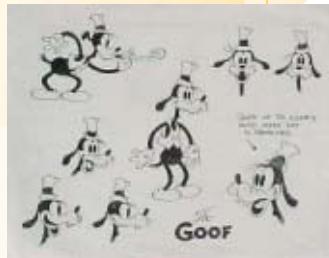


75 Years Ago

Burt Gillett's **Flowers and the Trees**, the Oscar-winning *Silly Symphonies* toon is the first short made with Technicolor's three-strip process.

George Pal introduces the famous **Puppetoon** series as part of an ad campaign.

Goofy, Disney's dim-witted and lovable canine, makes his first appearance in the 1932 short *Mickey's Revue*.



70 Years Ago



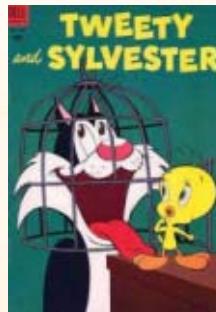
Directed by David Hand, **Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs**, Disney's first full-length animated feature, premieres on December 21, 1937. The film receives a special Oscar in 1939—one full-size Oscar and seven dwarf Oscars—presented to Disney by Shirley Temple. Released on Nov. 5, 1937, Disney's Oscar-winning short, *The Old Mill*, tells a story without relying on anthropomorphic characters. **Tex Avery** introduces **Daffy Duck** in the short *Porky's Duck Hunt*. **Mel Blanc** does his first voice work in *Picador Porky*.



Also, **Elmer Fudd** makes his debut in *Egghead Rules*—he was known as Egghead in his early days!

65 Years Ago

Bambi, David Hand's unforgettable forest fable, becomes Disney's fifth full-length feature. A pair of four-month-old fawns, several squirrels, birds, rabbits, chipmunks and other woodland creatures were brought to the studio for the animators to study during the six-year production period.



60 Years Ago

That feisty canary **Tweety Bird** and scheming cat **Sylvester** make their first appearance together in Friz Freleng's Oscar-winning short *Tweetie Pie*.

Donald Duck meets two of his favorite chipmunks in Jack Hannah's Oscar-nominated short *Chip an' Dale*.

continued on page 78





ANIMATION [an-uh-mey-shuhn]

"The Quality of Being Alive, Active, Spirited and Vigorous"

THE GOTHAM GROUP CONGRATULATES
ANIMATION MAGAZINE
ON 20 ILLUSTRIOUS YEARS

Toon Timeline

continued from page 76

55 Years Ago

William Hanna and Joseph Barbera hit another home run with the Oscar-winning *Johann Mouse*, considered one of the best *Tom and Jerry* toons of all time.



45 Years Ago



Two men discuss accidents and the possibility of nuclear war in John and Faith Hubley's Oscar-winning short, *The Hole*.



The Jetsons and *Wally Gator* are the latest TV toon series out of the Hanna Barbera hit factory.

50 Years Ago

William Hanna and Joseph Barbera leave MGM and form **Hanna Barbera Studios**.

Friz Freleng's Oscar-winning short *Birds Anonymous* puts Sylvester in a 12-step program for bird-eating addicts.

Chuck Jones puts Bugs Bunny in drag as the Valkyrie Brunhilde against hot-to-trot demi-god Siegfried played by Elmer Fudd in the much-loved short, *What's Opera, Doc?*

Among the popular animated shows debuting on TV this year are *The Gumby Show*, *Tom Terrific* and *The Woody Woodpecker Show*.



40 Years Ago

Directed by Wolfgang Reitherman, *The Jungle Book* is released in theaters. This



adaptation of the Rudyard Kipling story, which was the last movie Disney worked on before his death, is released in theaters. It features the catchy song "Bare Necessities" which earns an Oscar nom in 1968.

Fred Wolf and Jimmy Murakami team up to create the Oscar-winning eight-minute short, *The Box*.

Tansunoko's 1967 series *Speed Racer* introduces anime to American audiences in a big way.

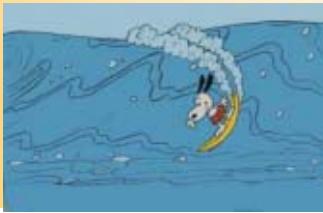
Animated TV properties such as *The Atom Ant/Secret Squirrel Show*, *Birdman and the Galaxy Trio*, *George of the Jungle*, *Spider-Man* and *The Superman/Aquaman Adventure Hour* win fans all over the country.

35 Years Ago

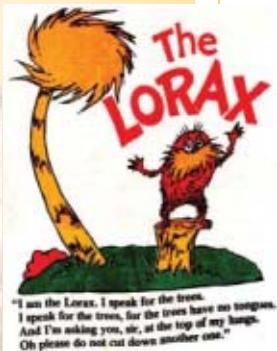
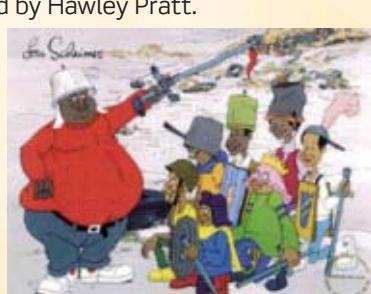
Ralph Bakshi rocks the toon world with his outrageous cult movie *Fritz the Cat*, based on the comics by **Robert Crumb**.

A mysterious creature warns the world about the dangers of cutting down trees in the CBS special, *The Lorax*, based on the book by Dr. Seuss and directed by Hawley Pratt. Baby boomers take in the wild colors and funkadelic sounds of animated TV shows such as *Fat Albert and the Cosby kids*, *Josie and the Pussycats in Outer Space*, *The Osmonds*, *The Roman Holidays*, *Sealab 2020* and *Wait Till Your Father Gets Home*.

Producers **Lee Mendelson** and **Charles M. Schulz** offered the second feature based on the popular Peanuts strip titled *Snoopy, Come Home*.



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HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ANIMATION MAGAZINE!



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Toon Timeline

continued from page 78

30 Years Ago



Director George Lucas and his team of vfx masters (John Dykstra, John Stears, Richard Edlund, Phil Tippett, Dennis Muren, Grant McCune, Robert Blalack) rewrote the book on fantasy filmmaking with the seminal epic *Star Wars*. Italian toon maestro **Bruno Bozzetto** has fun with classical music in the global cult hit *Allegro non troppo*.

The world meets Bernard and Bianca (voiced by Bob Newhart and Eva Gabor), the animated mice from Disney's popular feature, *The Rescuers*.

Disney mixes live action with an animated character in Don Chaffey's *Pete's Dragon*.



Disney mixes live action with an animated character in Don Chaffey's *Pete's Dragon*.



25 Years Ago

Directed by Disney renegade **Don Bluth**, the hugely underrated *The Secret of NIMH*, based on the book, opens a new chapter in the history of traditionally animated features.

Vincent, Tim Burton's animated homage to his favorite actor Vincent Price, offers a glimpse of what to expect from the acclaimed director in the years to come.

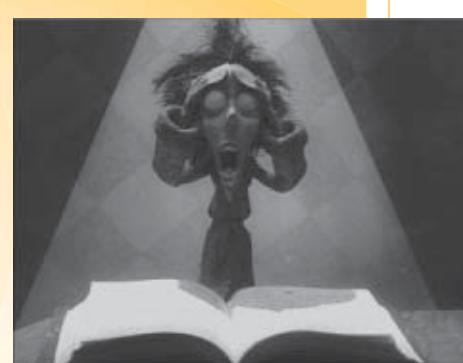
Polish animator **Zingier Rybczynski** delights festivalgoers with his Oscar-winning short *Tango*.

Dianne Jackson and **John Coates** bring Raymond Briggs' successful children's book, *The Snowman*, to animated life in a timeless Oscar-nominated Channel 4 special.

Among the shows debuting on TV this year are



Robotech: The Macross Saga, *Pac-Man* and *The Scooby and Scrappy-Doo Puppy Hour*.



20 Years Ago



Matt Groening's dysfunctional family *The Simpsons* makes its debut on FOX-TV's *The Tracey Ullman Show*.

Frederic Back's beautifully animated Oscar-winning short, *The Man Who Planted Trees*, delights animation fans and ecologically minded audiences everywhere. Disney's TV Animation division delivers the delightfully retro series, *DuckTales*.

Kevin Eastman and **Peter Laird**'s *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* leaps from the pages of the popular comics to the small screen thanks to a syndicated show produced by Murakami-Wolf-Swenson Films Productions.



Animator **Ralph Bakshi** and producer **John W. Hyde** team up for the brilliant and influential *Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures* series which debuts on CBS. The show served as a springboard for the likes of John Kricfalusi, Bruce Timm, Jim Reardon, Tom Minton, Lynne Naylor and Rich Moore. The acclaimed Oscar-nominated short, *Your Face*, puts New York indie animator **Bill Plympton** on the map.



continued on page 82

Touch the Nature of Magic...



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Princesses of Nature

Toon Timeline

15 Years Ago

continued from page 80

Ron Clements and **John Musker** continue the new wave of Disney animated features with their colorful *Aladdin* feature. The movie wins two Oscars (Best Score, Best Song "A Whole New World" by Alan Menken and Tim Rice) in 1988.



Cartoon Network switches the on button in 2 million homes. By 1995, the revolutionary toon cabler's subscriber numbers go up to 22 million.

Joan C. Gratz takes a survey of 20th century art in the Oscar-winning short *Mona Lisa Descending a Staircase*.



The TV series *Bananas in Pyjamas* are all the rage in Australia and abroad. Warner Bros. Animation delivers the stylish and well-received *Batman: The Animated Series*, produced by **Bruce Timm** and **Eric Radomski**.

Beast, Cyclops, Jean Grey and Wolverine are among the characters featured in *The X-Men* animated series on Fox.

Bill Kroger directs the feature toon *FernGully: The Last Rainforest*, a charming 2D movie with an ecologically correct message.

Bill Plympton completes his first feature-length film, *The Tune*.



10 Years Ago

SPECIAL REPORT

Matt Stone and **Trey Parker**'s envelope-pushing, irreverent *South Park* bows on Comedy Central.



It's a great year for girlcentric toons with MTV's *Daria*, Warner Bros.' *The Legend of Calamity Jane* and Disney's *Pepper Ann* premiering on the small screen.

Hayao Miyazaki's beautiful and haunting movie, *Princess Mononoke*, is released on July 12 in Japan.

Cartoon Network's *Cow and Chicken* and *Johnny Bravo* reaffirm the cabler's influential style.



Mark Dindal directs the critically acclaimed 2D toon *Cat's Don't Dance* (produced by Turner and released by Warner Bros.). The late Gene Kelly was the film's choreographer.

Created by Mitch Schauer, *The Angry Beavers* (about the bachelor brothers Daggett and Norbert Beaver) debuts on Nickelodeon.

Pokémon's Ash and Pikachu get their first animated TV series on TV Tokyo.

Directors **Ron Clements** and **John Musker** put an animated, musical spin on the Greek legend in the stylized Disney toon, *Hercules*.



Don Bluth and **Gary Goldman** explore the mystery of the Romanov Royalty in the traditionally drawn film *Anastasia*, featuring the voices of Meg Ryan and John Cusack.

The folks at Disney TV Animation offer viewers *101 Dalmatians: The Series* and *Recess*.

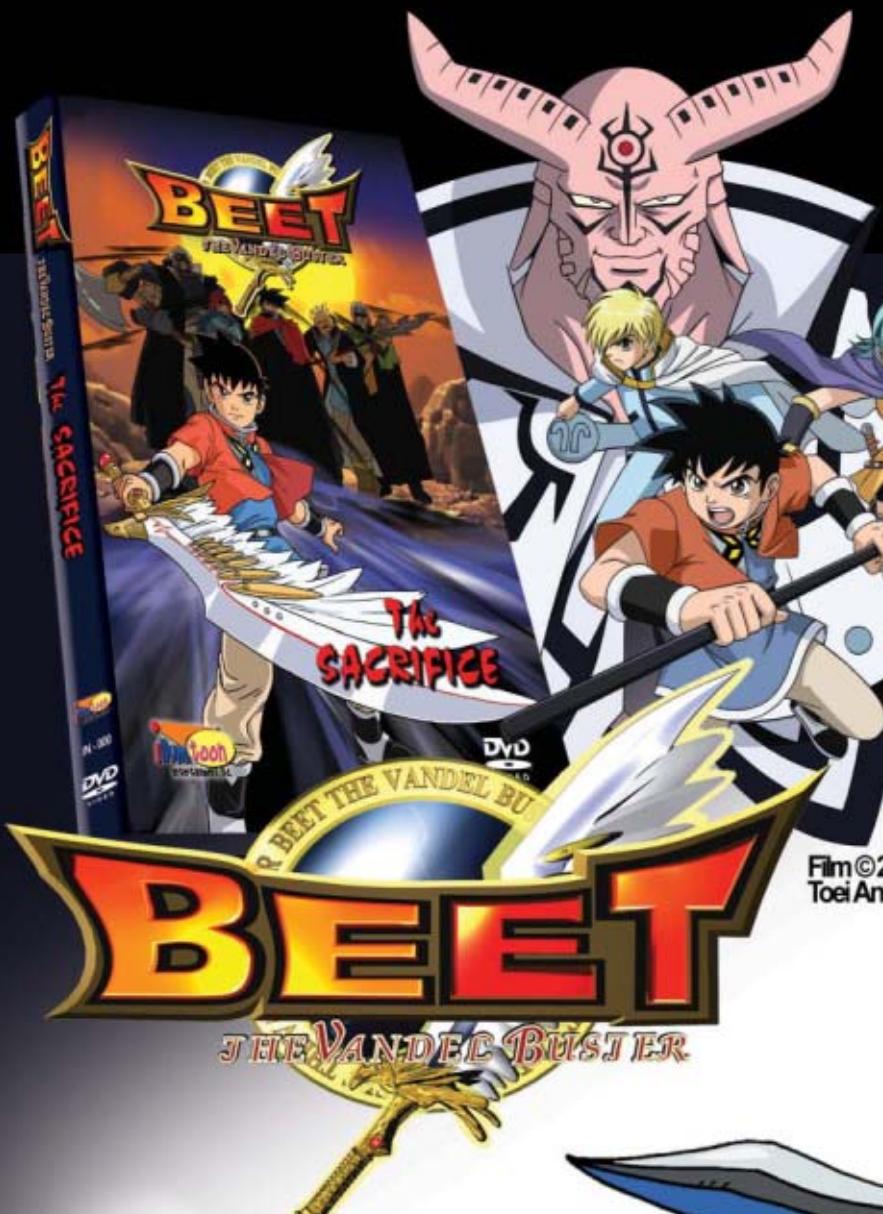
Mike Judge's slice-of-Texas life series *King of the Hill* debuts on the Fox network.

Geri's Game, a charming animated short by Pixar animator **Jan Pinkava** grabs a lot of attention thanks to its realistic CG depiction of clothing and textures. It wins

the Oscar the following year.



continued on page 84



from the animators of

**Dragon Ball Z &
Dragon Ball GT**

**The
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Bo-nafide Protector

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Spirited Away

Toon Timeline

Five Years Ago

continued from page 82

Hayao Miyazaki's Oscar-winning feature, *Spirited Away* earns new fans for the master Japanese animator when it's released by Disney in U.S. theaters in the summer. DreamWorks Animation's *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron* gives horse lovers a traditionally animated feature to love and admire.

Directed by Kelly Asbury and Lorna

Cooke, the pic earns an Oscar nom for Best Feature Animation as does **Ron Clements'** underrated adventure pic, *Treasure Planet*.



What's New Scooby-Doo?

Warner Bros. Animation welcomes *Ozzy and Drix*, *!Mucha Lucha!*, *What's New, Scooby-Doo?* and *Baby Looney Tunes* to its popular TV family.

Directed and written by **Chris Sanders** and **Dean**

DeBlois, Disney's beautifully animated *Lilo & Stitch* hits theaters in June. The film picks up an Oscar nomination in 2003.

Blue Sky joins forces with Fox to create the Oscar-nominated CG hit *Ice Age* (directed by **Chris Wedge** and **Carlos Saldanha**), which introduces auds to the popular character

Scrat and spawns a sequel in 2006.

Two eccentric new toons—*The Adventures of Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius* and *ChalkZone*—bow on Nickelodeon.

Cartoon Network welcomes the mischief-making clan of **Tom Warburton's** *Codename: Kids Next Door* and **Greg Miller's** *Whatever Happened to Robot Jones*, a cool toon with a serious '70s vibe.

Created by **Mark McCorkle** and **Robert Schooley**, the spunky, red-haired crimefighter known as *Kim Possible* begins her wacky adventures on the Disney Channel.

Masashi Kishimoto's hit manga series *Naruto* gets its own TV show on TV Tokyo and Animax in Japan. Also, *Mobile Suit: Gundam SEED* debuts on Tokyo Broadcasting System in October. Other movies celebrating five year anniversaries this year are *The Wild*



Naruto

The Wild
Thornberrys Movie

Thornberrys Movie, Strange Invaders, Return to Never Land, Pokémon 4Ever, Jonah: A VeggieTales Movie, Hey Arnold! The Movie and *Eight Crazy Nights*. Eric Armstrong creates some amazing CG-animated aliens in his Oscar-winning short, *The ChubbChubbs!* ■



Treasure Planet



Jimmy Neutron

Mobile Suit:
Gundam SEED

Return to Neverland



40 Auteurs We Love (1987-2006)

Making this list was a dirty job, but someone had to do it. The animation and vfx world is blessed with so many brilliant visionaries that it's impossible to narrow the field down in this small space. So please don't be upset if you or your favorite genius auteurs don't show up on this very subjective list. We'll be compiling another one for our 25th anniversary!



Andrew Adamson. The talented vfx pro-turned-blockbuster director from Auckland, New Zealand, has been topping himself ever since his first big helming effort on *Shrek* in 2001. He continued his winning streak with the movie's sequel and managed to bring together several top vfx houses from around the world to deliver the magical holiday treat that was the first *Chronicles of Narnia* in 2005. C.S. Lewis fans are thrilled that he's already working on the second *Narnia* movie, *Prince Caspian*.

Roger Allers. It's hard to think about the heights of 2D animation in Disney during the last two decades without the ferociously skilled animator/writer/director who brought *The Lion King* to life, as well as playing key roles in *Oliver & Company*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin* and *The Emperor's New Groove*. In 2006, he co-directed Sony Animation's CG-animated hit *Open Season* and offered a poignant, poetic short based on Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Matchgirl*—great work from a very gifted guy.



Danny Antonucci. We kind of knew back when Danny's short *Lupo the Butcher* took the festival world by storm in 1987 to expect great things from this one-of-a-kind animator. After creating MTV's *The Brothers Grunt* and working on *Cartoon Sushi*, he really hit his groove with the 1999 Cartoon Network show *Ed, Edd 'n' Eddy*. Six seasons later, the three underdog boys and Danny's Vancouver-based a.k.a. Cartoon studio continue to ride a much-deserved popularity wave.



Gary Baseman. Whether you love his illustrations (Cranium, anyone?) or fell for his Emmy-winning show *Teacher's Pet* and the underrated feature movie that got buried in the avalanche of CG movies two years ago, you know that Baseman is the real thing. The L.A.-based artist works hard on his line of first-rate vinyl toys, sculptures and collectibles—and you can visit his website (www.garybaseman.com) for more info on his latest creations.



Brad Bird. Funny how Bird gives you hope about the future of the medium whenever things look bleak. In 1989, with *The Iron Giant* he showed the world how you could do a traditionally animated movie that didn't resort to condescending formulas. Then he did it again with his Oscar-winning cartoony CG-animated *The Incredibles* in 2004. We wonder how he's going to exceed our expectations with his upcoming Pixar summer treat, *Ratatouille*?



Don Bluth. The brilliant talent that gave us the gentle 2D animated worlds of *The Secret of NIMH*, *An American Tail*, *The Land Before Time* and *All Dogs Go to Heaven* (and that kitchy animated bit in *Xanadu*) is also the enterprising man who set up his own indie studio and headed up Fox's animation shop in Phoenix and gave Disney stiff competition for a good while. Even his underrated projects such as *Titan A.E.* and the *Dragon Lair* 3D game have numerous inspired moments. The animation he created for Scissor Sisters' *Mary* video in 2004 may just be an indication of more wonderful stuff ahead from the Bluthmeister.



Tim Burton. There's a wonderfully complex career arc that has taken the former Disney animator from his stop-motion short, *Vincent* (1982), to last year's Oscar-nominated piece de resistance *The Corpse Bride*. He penned the script for *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and took us along the dizzying heights of *Batman*, *Edward Scissorhands* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and we always knew we're in the hands of a visual demon. Next stop is his film adaptation of *Sweeney Todd* with Johnny Depp.

continued on page 88

CONGRATULATIONS ANIMATION MAGAZINE ON YOUR 20TH ANNIVERSARY

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Auteurs

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Sylvain Chomet. We first fell in love with the French animator's work in the 1993 Oscar-winning short *The Old Lady and the Pigeon*. Then in 2002, he really knocked our socks off with the poetic, funny and very unusual feature *The Triplets of Belleville*. So we all cheered as his movie landed two Oscar nominations (Best Animated Feature and Best Song). And here's the good news for all those who are complaining that all animated features are beginning to look alike: Chomet's next big project is *The Illusionist*, featuring an animated version of French comic Jacques Tati. *Magnifique!*

Peter Chung. When we first saw Chung's progressive and starkly unique animation on display in MTV's *Aeon Flux* in the '90s, we knew a new star had been born. He followed that influential toon with *Phantom 2040* and *Reign: The Conqueror*. His directing credits include *The Matriculated* segment in *The Animatrix* and *The Chronicles of Riddick: Dark Fury*. Let's hope it's true that he's working on more episodes of *Flux* for a direct-to-DVD project and feature called *Luvula*.



Ron Clements & John Musker. We treasure these guys because they're the true links between the Disney toons from another era such as *The Fox and the Hound* and *The Great Mouse Detective* to the majestic heights of *The Little Mermaid* and *Aladdin*. We love the risks they took with *Hercules* and *Treasure Planet*, and our hearts sang when Disney's smart new leadership asked them to come back to look after the upcoming new feature, *The Frog Princess*. Here's to many more happy endings from the dynamic duo.

Matt Groening. Forget all those cute CG-animated critters—the summer of 2007 may very well belong to Groening and his delightfully dysfunctional Springfield clan as *The Simpsons Movie* hits theaters in July. There's no way around it: The man behind the longest-running American sitcom (and animated series) of all time has arguably inspired and warped more minds than anyone else in the past 20 years.



Butch Hartman. Kids really get a kick out of the snappy humor and situations of Hartman's monster hits *The Fairly OddParents* and *Danny Phantom*, and it's easy to see why. His distinctive vision and infectious energy have put him far ahead of his contemporaries in the TV business. The good news is that he's developing two more shows for Nickelodeon. And, yes, we forgive him for the English dub of *Doogal*.



Stephen Hillenburg. The one-time marine biology teacher hit the once-in-a-lifetime toon jackpot with his lovable yellow absorbent hero, *SpongeBob SquarePants*. Who could have predicted that the goofy residents of Bikini Bottom would leave such a lasting impact on our pop culture world. The 2004 feature release was a surreal blast, and we are so grateful to Hillenburg for giving us so many chuckles and making every optimist listen to his or her inner *SpongeBob* for decades to come.



Faith Hubley. Although Faith and John Hubley did the bulk of their joint projects during the '60s and '70s, Faith continued to be a prolific artist after her husband's death in 1977. Her teachings inspired a new generation of experimental animators until she passed away five years ago. These days her daughter Emily continues the family tradition of creating personal and artistic shorts.



Christy Hui. Born and raised in China and the founder of L.A.-based toon shop ActionFliks, Christy is the epitome of a multicultural world where eastern and western cultures blend together to create cool entertainment. After introducing us to monk-in-training Omi and his buddies (street smart Brazilian Raimundo, tech-savvy Kimiko and Texan cowboy Clay) in the hit Kids' WB! toon *Xiaolin Showdown*, Christy is now working on another awesome project called *The Hulala Girls: Goddesses of Nature*. We'll follow her gladly no matter to which far island of the world she takes us next.



Peter Jackson. One director to rule them all and one Gollum to show everyone else how CG effects can really improve the cinematic landscape. He pushed the envelope with his brilliant and visually arresting *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, then gave us a *King Kong* that would make Ray Harryhausen proud. His New Zealand-based vfx shop Weta continues to deliver interesting work. Too bad Jackson is suing New Line and won't be directing *The Hobbit*; otherwise we'd have more fun on the Shire in the future.

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Auteurs



Mike Judge. Even if this Austin-based animator/director/writer/and sometime actor had only created *Beavis and Butt-Head* in the past 20 years, he'd be guaranteed a spot on this list. But he (along with co-creator Greg Daniels) also brought us the offbeat and consistently funny world of Hank Hill and family in *King of the Hill* (which begins its 11th season on FOX this January). And if you still haven't caught his brilliantly funny live-action movies *Office Space* and *Idiocracy*, then you're truly in for a treat!

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Arlene Klasky & Gabor Csupo. For several years in the '90s, you couldn't turn on the TV or go to the movies or even shop at the market without being reminded of Klasky and Csupo's (and Paul Germain's) phenomenally popular *Rugrats* series. Artist/producer Klasky and master animator Gabor Csupo founded the influential animation studio Klasky Csupo in 1982 and created several hip, stylish toons for Nickelodeon (*Rocket Power*, *As Told by Ginger*, *The Wild Thornberrys*, to name a few) and four hit movies based on *Rugrats* and *The Wild Thornberrys*. They certainly left a huge impression on all the kids who grew up with Chucky, Angelica and the rest of the Carmichael clan.



Satoshi Kon. If you like your anime layered with psychological complexity and love movies that play with notions of reality, then you've probably built a DVD shrine to this Japanese master. He's played mind games with beautifully crafted movies such as *Perfect Blue*, *Millennium Actress*, *Tokyo Godfathers* and the TV series *Paranoia Agent*. He's back this year with the delicious *Paprika*. Too bad Hitchcock isn't alive to appreciate the homage.

John Kricfalusi. Ah, the amazing John K. Do we love him because he gave us the wild and twisted world of *Ren & Stimpy*? Or because he is always pushing the limits of good taste with eccentric creations such as *The Ripping Friends* and *The Goddamn George Liquor Program*? Maybe it's because he represents everyone's ideal of the irreverent, risk-taking, living-life-to-the-max artistic hero. Either way, we hope he keeps making our eyeballs bulge out of their sockets over and over again.



John Lasseter. All eyes have been on the brilliant and well-liked Pixar maestro ever since he took over the animation division at Disney. His most recent effort *Cars* raced to the top of the box-office and DVD charts in 2006 and is considered a frontrunner in the Oscar race. Not only did he win our hearts with his beautiful CG-animated movies such as *Toy Story* and *A Bug's Life*, he was also instrumental in introducing Miyazaki's movies to a whole new audience of U.S. moviegoers. On top of that, he's promised never to let Disney forget about 2D animation. What a guy!

SPECIAL REPORT

George Lucas. Yes, the Force will always be with the man who reshaped the fantasy landscape with his six *Star Wars* movies and introduced us to the legend of Indiana Jones. Not only did he give us the vfx powerhouse known as Industrial Light & Magic, he also re-configured the entertainment landscape with LucasFilm, LucasArt, Skywalker Ranch and Skywalker Sound, and now he has launched a new animation empire in Singapore. So what if he hated Frank Darabont's script for the fourth *Indiana Jones* movie? Patience is a virtue!



Seth MacFarlane. Yes, he only turned 33 last October, and he's already made a huge impact on the TV animation scene of the past 20 years. With the phenomenal success of his *Family Guy* TV show (and DVDs), and the subsequent re-order by FOX TV, he gave his fans a second treat with the irreverent and politically incorrect *American Dad* series in 2005. To prove that some people have talent to burn, he also provides the Emmy-winning voice of power-hungry baby Stewie Griffin, as well as four other main characters on the show. Sheesh!

Todd McFarlane. Comic-book fanatics knew about Todd back when he revitalized Marvel's Spider-Man franchise in the late '80s. The rest of us discovered his talents when HBO aired his occult-themed animated superhero series, *Spawn*, from 1997 to 1999. Not only does he have his own animation studio, he's the CEO of McFarlane Toys, which has produced some amazing collectibles featuring some of our favorite toons. (We're talking Wallace and Gromit, Looney Tunes, The Simpsons and Corpse Bride, not to mention the supercool *Lost* figurines.) He's the perfect example of a modern pro who can switch gears in the busy highway of American pop culture with the ease of a Zen master.



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Auteurs

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Craig McCracken. The folks at Cartoon Network knew they had hit the jackpot when they saw McCracken's first big series, *The PowerPuff Girls* in 1998. But who knew he'd be back to steal the hearts of young viewers again six years later with his delightful Flash-animated show, *Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends*? The good news is that the likable creator of these toons is only 35 and in great health, so we can expect a lot of awesome animation from him in the next 20 years.



Hayao Miyazaki. So much has been written about the poetic, strange and visionary work of this Japanese master that it seems redundant to bring them up again. How can you really verbalize the impact of movies such as *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Kiki's Delivery Service*, *Princess Mononoke*, *Spirited Away* and *Howl's Moving Castle* without resorting to superlatives? All we know is that we can't wait for the next movie by Studio Ghibli's genius in residence, which is reportedly based on a Chinese book called *I Lost My Little Boy*.



Michel Ocelot. If we lived in a perfect world, every household would know the name of this amazing French helmer, and every child would have seen his two beautiful *Kirikou* movies. This year, he dazzled French audiences with his latest fable, *Azur and Asmar*. Maybe a smart studio exec will reverse the trend and start distributing his movies in the U.S. We can dream, right?



Katsuhiro Otomo. Ever since *Akira* changed the anime landscape in 1988, fans have counted on the influential Japanese helmer and manga artist for his rebellious visions of the future. Although his most recent animated movies *Metropolis* and *Steamboy* didn't make as big a splash in the U.S., we all have our fingers crossed for his new live-action movie, *Mushishi*, which is based on a manga about ubiquitous floating creatures with supernatural powers.



Nick Park. As supremely talented as he is patient and modest, the four-time Oscar winning stop-motion master of Bristol-based Aardman Animations studio should be the role model for any aspiring artist. You'd have to be mentally deranged not to admire the wit and charm of his *Creature Comforts* and *Wallace and Gromit* shorts. He has continued to put his stamp of excellence on his two big-screen releases, *Chicken Run* and *W&G: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit*. If he started a cult tomorrow, we'd all sign up immediately.



Bill Plympton. Master of quirky hand-drawn shorts such as the 1987 Oscar-nominated *Your Face* and 2005's *Guard Dog*, as well as features such as *The Tune*, *I Married a Strange Person!* and the recently released *Hair High*, the indie toon master continues to push the envelope with his artistic creations. Don't miss his latest side-splitting work on Weird Al Yankovic's music video *Don't Download This Song*.



Joanna Priestley. Next time someone tries to tell you that you have to sell out to mainstream appetites, tell them to check out the amazing career and accomplishments of this talented Portland, Oregon-based experimental animator, who has directed and produced over 17 animated films. We still can't think of that Tears for Fears' "Sowing the Seeds of Love" song without remembering Priestley's remarkable animation for its music video!



Joanna Quinn. Even if you haven't seen this Birmingham, U.K.-born's Oscar-nominated shorts *Famous Fred* and *The Canterbury Tales*, you will instantly recognize her distinctive hand-drawn style from her popular ads for Charmin toilet paper and Whiskas cat food. Her latest effort, *Dreams and Desires: Family Ties*, has already won a truckload of international prizes and many predict will also be nominated for an Animated Short Oscar next month. We are simply in awe of her funny, poignant and most unique visions.



Henry Selick. It's easy to see why stop-mo students consider Selick a god. Meticulously crafted and exquisitely directed, *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and *James and the Giant Peach* have certainly left a huge impact on the cinematic landscape of the past two decades. We also admired his award-winning 2005 short, *Moongirl*, and can't wait until he finishes his next Laika studio feature, the film version of Neil Gaiman's haunting tale, *Coraline*.

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Auteurs

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Matt Stone & Trey Parker. The world has changed a lot since August of 1997, when Matt and Trey first introduced us to the crudely animated, insan world of *South Park*. Yet, the Emmy- and Peabody Award-winning show has continued to stay on the cutting-edge of pop culture 10Scientologists, gays, handicapped people, Tom Cruise—nothing is sacred in Stone-and-Parker-ville and that's why we admire the effing talented duo so much.



Genndy Tartakovsky. For many artists, having created two wildly influential and artistically praised toons would have been enough. But Genndy had to continue pushing his artistic boundaries. After giving us *Dexter's Laboratory* and *Samurai Jack*, he delivered *Star Wars: Clone Wars*, which was actually better than the last three chapters of the film saga! Now he and his team at San Francisco's The Orphanage are working on the sequel to *The Dark Crystal*. He is also involved with the upcoming [adult swim] offering *Korgoth of Barbaria*. How much more brilliance can we possibly take?

Bruce Timm & Eric Radomski. Timm was once quoted as saying "We're not trying to destroy the boys of America. We're just trying to make a good show!" Judging from the unique look and critical raves of the *Batman* and *Superman* series they created at Warner Bros. Animation in the '90s, they definitely did a heck of a job. Timm continued the winning streak with *Batman Beyond*, *Justice League* and *Teen Titans* while Radomski got busy with *Freakazoid!*, *Spawn* and *Xiaolin Showdown*. Let's hope they join forces for a feature next.



Bruce W. Smith. To give you an idea of the longevity of Smith's career, all you need to know is that he worked as animator on *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*. Since then, he's directed numerous TV shows, held top character design and animator jobs on Disney movies such as *Tarzan* and *The Emperor's New Groove*, directed a movie (*Bebe's Kids*) and created Disney Channel's long-running hit series *The Proud Family*. We have a feeling he's going to come up with more cool toons featuring positive role models in the years to come.



Jhonen Vasquez. Has it really been almost six years since Nickelodeon first aired this comic-book-artist turned cult hero animator's series *Invader ZIM*? Was it the dark humor, the crazy animation or the wonderful wry tone of the show that totally brainwashed us into becoming a Vasquez groupie? How many times have we watched the 27 episodes of the show? How many rivers have formed from the tears of fans who are still hoping he will bounce back with another killer toon?



Chris Wedge. Winning an Oscar for his haunting short, *Bunny*, in 1998 was just the beginning for this talented helmer and Blue Sky Studio creative titan. Since then, he has directed two smash CG-animated features (*Ice Age*, *Robots*) AND provided the hilarious squeaky voice of the tormented critter Scrat in the two *Ice Age* movies and shorts. These days he's working on an adaptation of William Joyce's *The Leaf Men* and the *Brave Good Bugs*. Don't believe him when he says he's not related to the Energizer Bunny.



Dave Willis and Matt Maiellaro. To say that Willis and Maiellaro have forever warped the distinctly ho-hum feel of late-night TV in America would be an understatement. Master Shake, Meatwad and Frylock have played with our heads for so long on [adult swim], that we take it for granted that they have a movie coming out this spring. This diabolical duo has truly set the tone for a new generation of adult cartoons, and we love them for being so utterly and deeply disturbed. ■

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Congratulations on the 20th anniversary
of Animation Magazine
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20 Things to Look Forward to in '07

Yeah, we know, another year is over and we'll all be one year older! But, hey, there are plenty of cool things awaiting us in 2007—we hope! Time to put on those rose-colored glasses and cross our fingers because no refunds are given on the time we'll spend on these movies and TV shows!

Bridge to Terabithia. Katherine Paterson's widely read fantasy becomes a vfx-laden live-action feature, directed by toon veteran Gabor Csupo (*Rugrats*, *The Wild Thornberrys*). The plot centers on the friendship between a fifth-grader and the new girl in town who discover a magical kingdom in a nearby forest. Don't forget your hanky for this one! [Opens Feb. 16]

Aqua Teen Hunger Force: The Movie. Never before have we had so much love and admiration for a meatball, a bag of fries and a milkshake. Yes, Matt Maiellaro and Dave Willis' [adult swim] faves make the leap to the big screen this winter. The feature tackles the mysterious circumstances that brought Meatwad, Frylock and Master Shake together and offers guest voices such as Rush drummer Neil Peart, Jon Benjamin and Bruce Campbell. Reportedly, the movie was a huge crowd-pleaser when it opened on Pluto last year. [Opens February]

El Tigre: The Adventures of Manny Rivera. Created by husband-and-wife team Jorge Gutierrez and Sandra Equihua, this colorful new toon centers on a 13-year-old who has to figure out whether to use his superpowers for good or for not so good! The look of the show is inspired by both classic spaghetti Westerns and Latino folk art! [Premieres on Nickelodeon in March.]



300. Graphic novel guru Frank Miller says he was blown away by the first footage of director Zack Snyder's feature adaptation of his project about the mythic Battle of Thermopylae in 480 B.C. Starring Gerard Butler, Lena Headey and Dominic West, the vfx-laden epic promises to be one of the visual spectacles of the spring season. [Opens March 9]



Meet the Robinsons. All eyes are on the Disney CG-animation team this spring to see how their follow-up to *Chicken Little* will fare critically and commercially. Based on the popular children's book by William Joyce (*A Day with Wilbur Robinson*), the retro-futuristic



movie is directed by Stephen J. Anderson, who has worked on a wide range of Mouse House projects, including *Tarzan*, *Brother Bear* and *Emperor's New Groove*. [Opens March 30]

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Writer-director Kevin Munroe is bringing a darker edge to this much-anticipated CG-animated adaptation of Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird's comic-book characters. Animated by Imagin and distributed by Warner Bros. and The Weinstein Co., the film finds Donatello, Raphael and Michelangelo lost and directionless in the Big Apple until Master Splinter and Leonardo unite the green pals against a dangerous tech industrialist. [Opens March 23]

My Friends Tigger & Pooh. A.A. Milne's honey-loving bear and his colorful collection of pals get the CG treatment in Disney Channel's new preschool toon, which also centers on a six-year-old girl named Darby—sorry, Christopher Robin, you had your share of the limelight already! Veteran voice star Jim Cummings does double duty as both Pooh and Tigger. [Premieres on Disney Channel's Playhouse Disney block in the spring.]

Persepolis. Three cheers for Sony Pictures Classic for releasing this super-cool adaptation of Marjane Satrapi's acclaimed graphic novel. Directed by Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud, the black-and-white 2D-animated movie follows the coming of age of a spirited young girl during the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran. The voice list includes Catherine Deneuve, Gena Rowlands and Chiara Mastroianni. Produced by Marc-Antoine Robert and Xavier Rigault of 2.4.7. Films, Kathleen Kennedy of Kennedy Marshall and France 3 Cinema. [Opens in the spring.]

Spider-Man 3. Could third time still be a charm for Tobey Maguire as angst-ridden Peter Parker and his web-slinging alter ego? Directed by masterful helmer Sam Raimi, this first entry in the summer blockbuster derby finds Spidey bonding with a dark entity from another world, as well as dealing with villains such as Sandman (Thomas Haden Church) and Eddie Brock (Topher Grace). Kirsten Dunst and James Franco reprise their roles as Mary Jane and Harry. Bryce Dallas Howard also stars as Gwen Stacy. [Opens May 4]



Shrek the Third. The secret weapon in this third outing for the lovable CG ogre (voice of Mike Myers) and his talented wife, *continued on page 98*

Bauhaus Software Congratulates Animation Magazine on 20 Great Years



Looking Forward



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Princess Fiona (the effervescent Cameron Diaz), is the little bundle of greenish joy they add to their family. Julie Andrews, John Cleese, Antonio Banderas, Eddie Murphy, Larry King, Ian McShane, Regis Philbin, Rupert Everett, Amy Sedaris, Maya Rudolph, Amy Poehler and Cheri Oteri are all part of the royal cast, directed by DreamWorks' Chris Miller and Raman Hui. **[Opens May 18]**

Surf's Up. After their fall hunting world adventure last year, the team at Sony Animation is offering a wonderful animated mockumentary about the Penguin World Surfing Championship. The totally dudacious cast is led by Jeff Bridges, Mario Cantone, Shia LaBeouf, James Woods and Zooey Deschanel. Ash Brannon and Chris Buck are at the helm of this perfect summer offering. **[Opens June 8]**

Ratatouille. What would the summer be without another clever, offering from the brilliant boffins at Pixar? Co-directed by Brad Bird and Jan Pinkava, this seventh Pixar feature release tells the story of an eager rat who dreams of being a chef at a Parisian bistro! Brad Garrett, Ian Holm, Patton Oswalt, Janeane Garofalo and Brian Dennehy round up the voice cast. **[Opens June 29]**



Transformers. Geek alert! Action auteur Michael Bay directs this anticipated live-action version of the popular '80s toon. Produced by Steven Spielberg, this one has major summer blockbuster potential. The ubiquitous Shia LaBeouf plays the lead, and Peter Cullen returns as the voice of Autobot leader Optimus Prime. **[Opens July 4]**

SPECIAL REPORT



Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix. Harry, Hermione and Ron are older and wiser in this fifth outing for the Hogwarts wizards but their powerful adversary Lord Voldemort (Ralph Fiennes) has also upped the ante by undermining their protective headmaster, Dumbledore (Michael Gambon). Helena Bonham Carter and Imelda Staunton join the cast as Death Eater Bellatrix Lestrange and the evil Dolores Umbridge. David Yates (HBO's *The Girl in the Café*) takes over as director. **[Opens July 13]**

The Simpsons Movie. You must have taken a sabbatical to the moon if you aren't aware of this summer's hugely anticipated big-screen adventure of Springfield's dysfunctional family. After 18 seasons on Fox, the clan (all voiced by the original stars of the show) is finally ready for its close-up! The heavily guarded plotline reportedly takes off when Homer

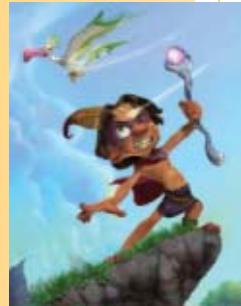
is fired from his job after poisoning the town's water supply and all the town folks have to flee their homes. Minnie Driver, Albert Brooks, Kelsey Grammer and Joe Mantegna are some of the guest stars; David Silverman directs. **[Opens July 27]**



Igor. The talented team at Exodus Entertainment have cooked up a tasty CG-animated treat for all of us who have a soft spot for the hunchback assistants of evil scientists in B-movieland. Directed by Anthony Leondis (*Lilo & Stitch 2: Stitch Has a Glitch*), the toon features the voices of Christian Slater as the lead character, Molly Shannon as his indestructible female monster creation. John Cleese, Steve Buscemi and Jeremy Piven co-star. **[Third Quarter, 2007]**

Underdog. Almost 43 years after the goofy rhyming superhero made TV audiences fall for his canine charms, he gets his own movie in which he'll be voiced by none other than Jason Lee (*My Name Is Earl*). The live-action/CG-animated movie is directed by Frederik Du Chau (*Quest for Camelot*, *Racing Stripes*) and features Amy Adams as the voice of love interest, Sweet Polly Purebred. Jim Belushi, Peter Dinklage and Patrick Warburton are also on board. **[Opens Aug. 3]**

Tak and the Power of Juju. The hit videogame becomes a CG-animated show about a jungle boy (voiced by Hal Sparks) who acquires some magical powers thanks to some of his friends in the Juju realm. Of course, his new abilities always get him and his best friend Jeera and the Pupunu villagers into trouble. **[Premieres on Nickelodeon in Oct.]**



Bee Movie. The Internet is already abuzz about the clever live-action trailer featuring lead voice Jerry Seinfeld. The famous comic stars as the heroic bee Barry B. Benson who thinks there should be more to life than making honey.



Renée Zellweger supplies the voice of a New York city florist who saves his life. The DreamWorks Animation project is directed by Steve Hickner and Simon J. Smith. **[Opens Nov. 2]**

His Dark Materials: The Golden Compass. Philip Pullman's fantasy about a young girl with magical powers and a shape-shifting animal soul (Yeah, we know, it's complicated!) who fights evil in a parallel world in the far North has been begging to be adapted into a live-action Narnia-like epic. Next year's holiday treat is directed by Chris Weitz (*About a Boy*, *American Pie*) and stars Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig as two of the film's mystical characters. To make comparisons with *Lord of the Rings* even easier, it's the first part of a trilogy! **[Opens Dec. 7]**

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13 People, Platforms and Trends That Are Reshaping Our World

by Chris Grove



Steve Jobs—iPod Nation: When Jobs came back to Apple in 1996 he was the company's last best hope. And it seems to be panning out! Jobs and his team quickly made the company relevant again when it introduced the iMac computer. That and its progeny—especially the transformational iPod, iTunes and everything else “i”—have moved the company and its aesthetic into an entirely different level.

The iPod will, no doubt, stand for many years to come as a case study of how to design and launch a new product and then keep it relevant and cool well beyond the normal life cycle of a “hot” consumer toy. And then there's the ultimate pop culture achievement: Having a populist activity (in this case, downloading video and audio content to a mobile device) named after your product. Not Windows MP3casting (or Zunecasting), but podcasting. Jobs has a reputation as being a mercurial and terrorizing boss. But when you buy a company like Pixar (which he did for \$5 million dollars) and sell it 20 years later for over \$7 billion, and when you rescue a moribund company like Apple and turn it into the coolest computer company in the world, have at it Steve.

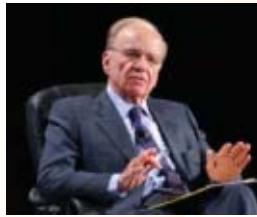
SPECIAL REPORT



Sir Howard Stringer—and His Problematic PlayStation: While many people have had a lot of schadenfreude-fun roasting Sony over its PlayStation 3 delays, they missed the essence of the story. The technology companies such as Sony are putting into these players is vastly more complicated than that used to put a man on the moon—even if the downside is less dire. Finally, after over-promising, PlayStation 3 is here. When the first machines hit the market in Japan in November 2006, the lines outside

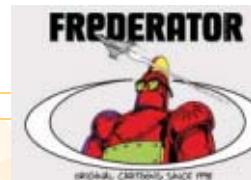
stores were longer than those for a Harry Potter book signing. And as for the media dirge that there are no titles for PS3. Not for long. A reporter on a major network recently asked a business analyst whether delays over PS3 (and the computer battery recall) meant the end of Sony. The analyst should have called the reporter an idiot but instead patiently explained that Sony was the biggest electronics company in the world, that they had thousands of consumer products, so no, the sky wasn't falling on Sony. The video game market is still Sony's to lose, however. Market researcher Yankee Group says that by 2011, PlayStation 3 will hold 44 percent of the console market, followed by Microsoft with 40 percent and Nintendo, with 16 percent.

Rupert Murdoch: I know. He's definitely an old, old-guard guy. But he's a very rich old, old-guard guy. And when he makes a big move, most of us are going to feel it. Young people “don't want to rely on a God-like figure from above to tell them what's important,” Murdoch told a gathering of newspaper execs in the spring of 2005.



Three months later News Corp. paid \$580 million dollars to buy myspace.com. Early in 2005, Murdoch had ridiculed the concept of podcasting. “Who wants to pay \$1.99 to watch a show on a one-inch screen?” was the gist of what he said. But there's a reason he has built one of the biggest media companies in the world: He has a wicked learning curve. Industry observers said Murdoch's unusual “mea culpa” was a sign that News Corp. was gearing up for a wholesale revamp of its approach to the Internet. The other shoe hasn't dropped. Yet.

The Podcasting Revolution—The New Wave: Among the emerging players in the podcast space, the talent is as wide as it is deep. Consider:



Fred Siebert and channelfrederator.com: While the Internet remains a vast public marketplace of ideas (and not yet totally controlled by big corporations), media veteran Fred Siebert has created a spot in the market where creative democracy is flourishing. Any animator in the world can send their short subject to frederator.com where, if picked to be in that week's podcast, can be seen by millions worldwide.



John Evershed: No not the John Evershed who was a reasonably famous British astronomer, the guy behind **Mondo Media** and **Happy Tree Friends**. Producing content exclusively for the Internet and mobile devices, Evershed's fantastically inappropriate toons typify the best of what can be accomplished on the web. Since the company's inception in 1988, Evershed's focus has been on the creation and distribution of animated entertainment for a wide range of platforms—videogames, online content, television and, most recently, for mobile and other wireless devices. For its part, *Happy Tree Friends* has become a worldwide franchise on all platforms (including iTunes podcasts, where it's always in the top 25), and a full line of merchandise.

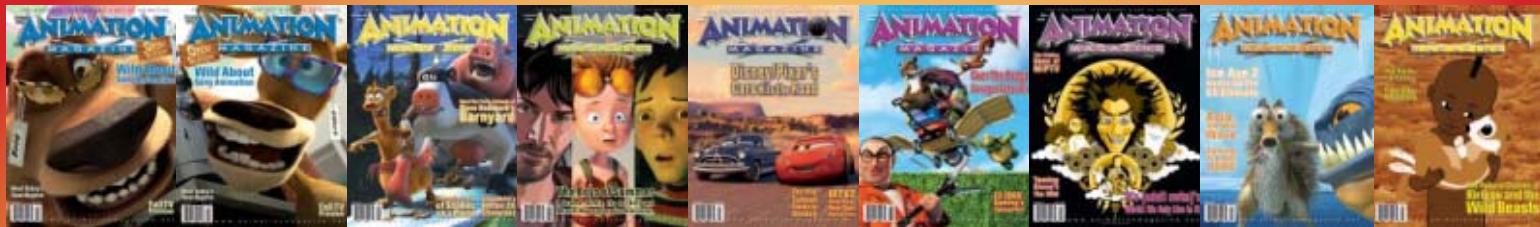


homestarrunner.com: Another online animation channel that's making some waves is home to a number of Flash toon series where the low-tech of the character design and the animation are an integral part of the edgy satire. Think *The Simpsons* redux. Created by Atlanta natives **Mike Chapman** and **Craig Zobel**, the flagship series centers on Homestar



Runner, a talented but very dumb athlete. Homestar's main antagonist, Strong Bad, is also in a series called *Strong Bad Email*, one of the most popular features of the site. There are about another dozen recurring characters in Homestar's roster. Zobel, while still a contributor, has moved on to other things. Chapman and his brother Matt now run the site day-to-day.

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Reshaping the World

continued from page 100

 **YouTube:** When Bill Gates (see below) famously said that he liked to hire young, inexperienced programmers because they didn't know what was impossible, he may have had people such as YouTube founders **Chad Hurley** and **Steve Chen** in mind. Similar to Gates and Microsoft, Hurley and Chen started their company in a garage (Hurley's) and in a mind-blowing 18 months went from broke start-up guys to billionaires. Just like a flashback to the insane dot.com daze of the late 1990s, Google ponied up \$1.65 billion for the company a few months ago.



billionaires. Just like a flashback to the insane dot.com daze of the late 1990s, Google ponied up \$1.65 billion for the company a few months ago.

 **JibJab:** Is there anyone who *didn't* see JibJab's breakthrough online Bush/Kerry rendition of *This Land Is My Land* during the 2004 presidential race? Whatever, it put founding brothers **Gregg** and **Evan Spiridellis** on the map, after six years of trying to build a presence online. By the end of the election season both *This Land* and the follow-up *Good To Be In D.C.!* had been seen more than 80 million times online on every continent, including Antarctica. Last month, they premiered a new short spoofing *American Idol* champ Taylor Hicks, sung by none other than Weird Al Yankovic titled *Do I Creep You Out?* Now that's what we call a perfect marriage of old (circa '80s) and new media.



 **angryalien.com:** Though maybe not as high-profile as the brothers Spiridellis, **Jennifer Shiman's** *Bunny Movie* spoofs are another example of how great content can prevail in a



A cartoon illustration of a scientist with a white lab coat and a stethoscope around their neck. The coat has the words 'BUNNY-TECH' printed on it. They are holding a small, dark device in their hands, looking at it with a focused expression. The background is a simple laboratory setting with shelves and equipment.

through PayPal donations, which generally offsets the cost of running the website.

 **It's Jerry Time:** If anyone proves the cliché that no matter what the technology, ideas still count, it's the guys behind the laconic web presence itsjerrytime.com. The series is the creation of Needham, Mass.-based **Orrin** and **Jerry Zucker**. With a tone that suggests a non-conflicted Harvey Pekar, the series of quirky Flash shorts follows the



exploits of Jerry as he endures the vicissitudes of his life in Massachusetts. Works at his last design studio there that series was for a non-new category, really for non-the series late 2005, going on in very much as in a lot of environment."

 **Microsoft:** If ever there was a case of first-in wins, it's Microsoft. Because **Bill Gates** had the chutzpah and luck to get IBM to give him licensing rights to provide the OS for all non-IBM PCs in the early 1980s (IBM mistakenly believed the PC clone market would never happen) he's now worth \$53 billion. Since then, almost all Microsoft's new products and initiatives have more or less sucked. Windows 98, Vista? Not as cool as Mac OS or as robust. And as for Zune 2006? Looks and feels like an iPod. If you want to know how ham-handed Microsoft remains, the subscription business-model for their music download service is so much more awkward than iTunes' streamlined pay-as-you-go method, it's hard to figure out what Microsoft's rationale is. While Zune's WiFi capability and interactivity with Xbox 360 are interesting, it's probably not enough to derail or even rival iPod's five-year head start. Nonetheless, to say that MS isn't a mover and shaker



would be ridiculous. Even when they make mistakes, what they do is shift people's perceptions and behavior.

 **Cold Hard Flash:** With Flash animation everywhere, it only follows that the Flash cognoscente need a place to hang on the web. Coldhardflash.com is the brainchild of **Aaron Simpson**, vice president, Interactive at JibJab Media. He was, among other things, nominated for an Emmy for his work on *Coconut Fred's Fruit Salad Island*, a Flash series on Kids' WB! Prior to Warner Bros., Simpson was senior producer of original content at Sony, where he helped build a forward-thinking entertainment portal, Screenblast. Coldhardflash, meanwhile, now is a very popular news source focusing on TV production and online shorts being produced with Flash. Three years ago, says Simpson, there were no more than five Flash-animated shows airing on TV. Today, that number is closer to 40. Beyond TV, the web is now full of independent animators making a living solely off their original series work. The site is maintained by industry professionals, and is not affiliated with any studio, company or organization.

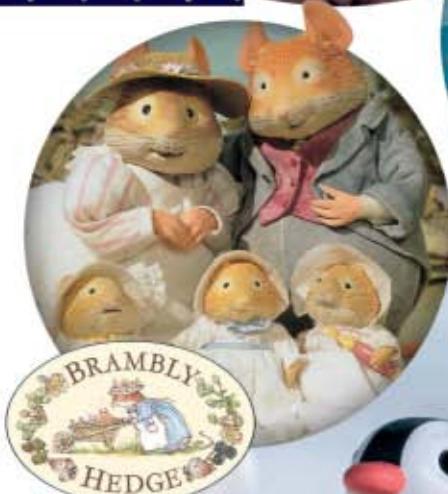


 **Small Screen Grows More Tenticles:** When it came to greenlighting new projects, it used to be that TV and cable execs were tough-as-nails gatekeepers of the business. Now that homegrown podcasts and desktop toons are rocking our world, it's good to see all the old media types extending their reach to the new media world and opening new doors for creators. Here's to the folks at Cartoon Network's adultswim.com, Comedy Central's Motherload site, Nickelodeon's Nick.com and Disney.com which are extending their brands' reach and offering new opportunities for up-and-coming animation talent.

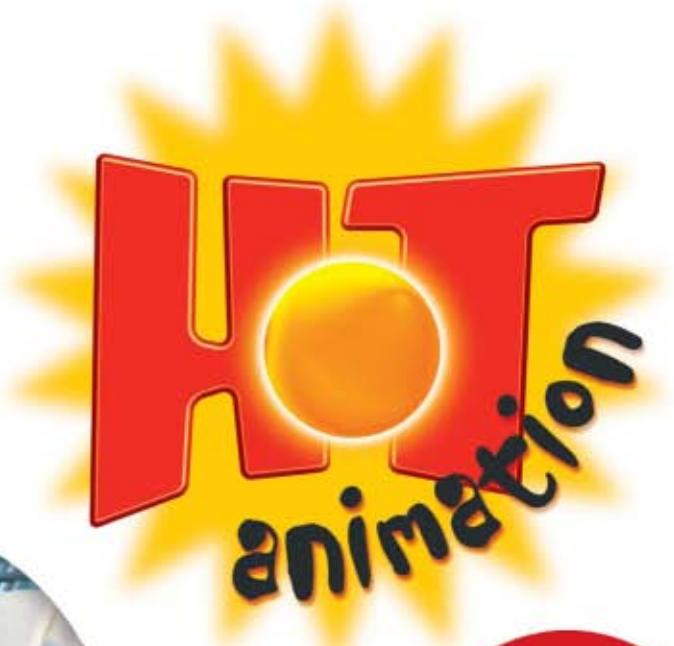
 **Triumphant Tools:** It's almost impossible to list them all, but if you're an animator or a time- and cash-stripped executive, you know how much we all owe to the new generations of vfx and animation tools. Alias Maya, Autodesk's Motionbuilder and 3ds Max, Softimage|XSI, Toon Boom's Storyboard and Studio, CelAction 2D, Nvidia's Gelato, Houdini, Carrara, Adobe Macromedia's Flash, Wacom's Cintiq tablets and all the other toon essentials (too many to mention here), we all salute you! ■



Bob the Builder

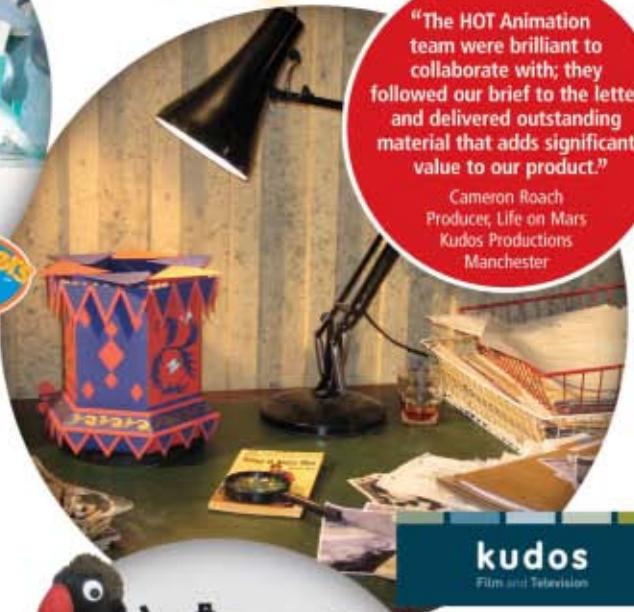


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20 Things We Hope We Never Have to Hear Again in the Next 20 Years!

SPECIAL REPORT

7. My kids love the characters I've created. My Timmy was just telling me that our alien Zoda clone reminds him a lot of SpongeBob. I kid you not!

10. If you don't watch our show that means the terrorists have won.

14. Lindsay Lohan was like spotted at Hyde last week wearing a t-shirt with our lead character's design on it. It was so totally hot.

17. We really want to open our network's demographics so that it goes beyond your usual animation fan—we want to reach the Home and Garden Network crowd as well as the flyfishing fanatic, the geriatric Jerry Springer audience, the reality show addict base as well as the diehard fans of *Lost*.

11. Pamela Anderson has expressed interest in doing the voice of our space vixen/island goddess/sexy fly/hot urban robot crack whore.

15. The test audiences for our CG-animated movie, which is about the little lost CG-animated barnyard pet who loses his parents in a tragic fire, so he shrinks down and joins an ant colony, then bonds with all the other lost zoo animals in Africa, went crazy for the film.

18. Our Dung Beetle movie has the poetry and majesty of a mid-career Miyazaki classic.

1. Really, it's all about the story.
2. We are huge fans of the classic Looney Tunes.
3. Our CGI animation pays homage to the old Fleischer cartoons.
4. We like to think of ourselves as the next Pixar—well, make that the Pixar of Baden Baden at least.
5. Not only are we trying to push the envelope with our multiplatform webisodes, we're going to blow up the envelope to teeny little smithereens.
6. We're really honored to have Mark Hamill provide the voices of all of our characters—even those really toothy ankle-biting moss-covered characters.
7. My kids love the characters I've created. My Timmy was just telling me that our alien Zoda clone reminds him a lot of SpongeBob. I kid you not!
8. Although we're relying on the same technology and production process, we're re-inventing the way cartoons are made in the next century.
9. I actually modeled my career on that of John Lasseter, well, without all the redundant education, craftsmanship and random inspiration.
10. If you don't watch our show that means the terrorists have won.
11. Pamela Anderson has expressed interest in doing the voice of our space vixen/island goddess/sexy fly/hot urban robot crack whore.
12. Our development executives may still be in their teens but they are really huge fans of classic animation.
13. The film's animation director despises all things American. He only cares about avant garde abstract expressionism and movies about how fascism kills the human spirit.
14. Lindsay Lohan was like spotted at Hyde last week wearing a t-shirt with our lead character's design on it. It was so totally hot.
15. The test audiences for our CG-animated movie, which is about the little lost CG-animated barnyard pet who loses his parents in a tragic fire, so he shrinks down and joins an ant colony, then bonds with all the other lost zoo animals in Africa, went crazy for the film.
16. Our writers wanted to pay tribute to the same crappy shows they used to watch when they were neglected by their parents as kids growing up in the 60s and 70s.
17. We really want to open our network's demographics so that it goes beyond your usual animation fan—we want to reach the Home and Garden Network crowd as well as the flyfishing fanatic, the geriatric Jerry Springer audience, the reality show addict base as well as the diehard fans of *Lost*.
18. Our Dung Beetle movie has the poetry and majesty of a mid-career Miyazaki classic.
19. Our merchandising and licensing program got a huge write-up in *Kidscreen*!
20. We're all about the squash and stretch!

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20 Zeitgeist-Defining Animated Music Videos

It's no secret that some of the most cutting-edge, envelope-pushing animation of the past two decades has been created for music videos. While MTV has opted to air vapid reality shows about spoiled rich white teenagers in Orange County, we can still hope that new platforms will allow music videos to take back the high place they held in pop culture during the day-glo-wake-me-up-before-you-go-go '80s. **by Chris Grove**



A-ha: Take on Me. The rotoscoping animation in A-ha's one hit-wonder *Take on Me* was an eye-opener when it was released in 1985. At the time, the vid was definitely in the how-did-they-do-that category, as lead singer/quasi-castrati Morten Harket walked through mirrors and walls into a black and white, pencil-drawn world. The vid won a 1986 MTV Viewer's Choice award, which was given by the members of Van Halen (post David Lee Roth) dressed in orange jump suits and looking like a chain gang from a California men's penal colony.

SPECIAL REPORT

Dire Straits: Money for Nothing. Around the same time as the three lads from Norway were making a splash in their denim jackets and pompadours, Mark Knopfler and Dire Straits broke the monotony of MTV's early and sometimes laughably low-tech music videos with an animated version of *Money for Nothing*. Animation for the vid marked an early example of 3D CGI, albeit crude and totally unsophisticated by *Toy Story* standards.



Peter Gabriel: Sledgehammer. Even if you don't like Peter Gabriel's music, it's sort of impossible not to admire and even groove to the video of the 1986 single *Sledgehammer* (from the multi-platinum album *So*). Partly animated by a then-unknown student, Nick Park (and directed by Steve Jordan), the surrealistic video with stop-motion claymation and multi-layering gave viewers some relief at a time when the



music video format was getting pretty stale. It swept the MTV video music awards in 1987. *Sledgehammer* is 4th on MTV's Top 100 Of All Time list (one through three, in case you're interested, being *Thriller*, *Vogue* and *Smells Like Teen Spirit*).

Radiohead: Paranoid Android. A great song born out of bandleader Thom Yorke's bizarre and unsettling experience in a trendy Los Angeles bar, *Paranoid* has been described by the band as three songs in one (much as John Lennon's *Happiness is a Warm Gun* was a pastiche of Lennon bits). Directed by Swedish animator Magnus Carlsson, the 1997 six-minute video has the distinction of being censored by MTV. Apparently, cartoon nipples are not allowed on MTV even if sweaty, gyrating, barely clothed, booty-bumping, live action, gun-toting young adults are.



Daft Punk: Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger. French techno-pop duo Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel



De Homem-Christo renamed their act after a reviewer in British music rag *Melody Maker* said their first collaboration was "a bunch of daft punk." Either sensing or helping develop the anime rage in the West, the group used the talents of Japanese legend Leiji Matsumoto (*Galaxy Express 999* and *Captain Harlock*) for the vids for their hit 2001 album *Discovery*. The animes for tracks *One More Time*, *Aerodynamic*, *Digital Love* and *Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger* are all part of the same story, and no one is

demonstrably better than the other. Because *Harder* is the capper to the story, we pick it as the one to make the list. Or as, Ali G would say, *respec'*.

Coldplay: Don't Panic. Some fans grouse that Tim Hope's animation for this video doesn't match the brilliance of the early Coldplay hit *Don't Panic*. But as it is (a) a promise of even greater things to come song-wise and (b) because it had two passes on the charts (first as a 2001 hit for the band upon the song's release and later in 2004 when actor/director Zach Braff used the track in *Garden State*) it's on. The central irony of the video is the contrast of the lyric ("We Live in a Beautiful World") with images of rampant consumerism and pollution defiling the planet's ecosystem care of Hope's underrated images.



Gorillaz: Clint Eastwood. This video deserves a place in line because it's the first from the world's purported first virtual hip-hop group. The on-screen look of the band comes from the mind and imagination of *Tank Girl* comic artist Jamie Hewlett. The single/video that established the band as a force to be reckoned with was directed/animated by Jamie Hewlett and Pete Candelan of U.K.-based Passion Pictures. Last year's CG-animated *Feel Good, Inc.* video was also a beautiful sight to behold. Directed by Peter Candelan, the toon made you wish you could actually visit the band's floating windmill in the sky.



Kraftwerk: Autobahn. At first listen (22.5- minutes long), the groundbreaking *Autobahn* just sounds like good parody material. But the 1974 release was a very early example of electronica and established the genre in the minds of young music fans around the world. The video for the song wasn't produced until 1979 by the then-67-year-old Oscar-nominated John Halas and animator Roger Mainwood.

Elvis Costello: Accidents Will Happen. At what was arguably the height of the popularity of Elvis Costello and the Attractions, his record label hired the animation team of Rocky Morton and Annabel Jankel of *Max Headroom* fame to produce the video for this top Costello hit. Despite their success as animators, Morton and Jankel's foray into features was less stellar—*D.O.A.* (1988), starring Dennis Quaid and Meg Ryan and *Super Mario Bros.* (1993) were both box-office flops.

continued on page 108



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Music Videos

continued from page 106

Rolling Stones: Harlem Shuffle. Even though the Stones haven't done anything musically interesting in 25 years, as the most successful rock and roll ever, they had to be included. The lads' remake of soul legend Bobby Womack's *Harlem Shuffle* saw the light of day on MTV et. al., as a cartoon. The three-minute vid combines live action with animation and was directed by Ralph Bakshi. The animation was directed by future *Ren and Stimpy* creator John Kricfalusi.

New Order: Blue Monday. Arising out of the ashes of Joy Division, New Order became one of the most influential post-punk/electronic dance music acts of the 1980s. *Blue Monday* was one of their biggest hits. To animate the video for the song, the band turned to an experimental filmmaker who'd first made a splash in the 1950s. Robert Breer is widely considered to be the father of American experimental animation much as Norman McLaren was in Canada.

Howie B: Music for Babies. Ambient music, as someone has said elsewhere, isn't music to be listened to. It's music to be heard. Scotland-based Howie B, is one of the most successful composers of ambient. In this case, *Music For Babies* was inspired by the birth of Howie B's first child. Even though the music might put one to sleep, British animator Run Wrake's (*Rabbit*) arresting visuals for the song, will keep you awake. At least for a few minutes.

Korn: Freak on a Leash. Korn's Bakersfield brand of nu heavy metal certainly isn't for meditation. *Freak on a Leash*, directed by Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris (*Smashing Pumpkins* videos, *Little Miss Sunshine*), is a tense film that follows the journey of an errant bullet through to the

surprising end. The image of the indestructible bullet, literally and figuratively, drives the suspense of the film's brief narrative.



Tina Turner & Barry White: Never in Your Wildest Dreams. This video is notable for a number of things. First, it was produced by Aardman artist Bill Mather (*Batman Returns*, *Forrest Gump*, *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace*) before the company became a household name stateside. Second, it features a cameo by Wallace and Gromit, who had also yet to become widely famous beyond the shores of Blighty. And third, it

was seen only once before Barry White had the thing banned. (If you want to know why see: www.williamharleymather.co.uk/videos/TinaTurner.html) The Tina Turner/Barry White song only hit number 32 on the U.K. charts and number 36 in the U.S. But it's arresting visually and is a terrific early example of the cheeky, witty humor that has become one of Aardman's signatures.

White Stripes: The Hardest Button to Button.

Continuing his penchant for stop motion, director Michel Gondry had to secure the use of a New York City subway car, 32 identical Ludwig drum kits, 32 guitar amplifiers and 16 microphone stands to make this one happen. The concept was simple but logically hard to do. In the video, the Stripes play their blues number as lead singer Jack struts down the streets of Manhattan and drummer Meg hops from kit to kit. The journey takes them through the city, into a park and down into the subway, while accompanied by multiplying and retracting sets of drum kits and amplifiers. Each time the duo moved forward, the last set of instruments in line would be peeled off and brought to the front. It was a laborious process that led to three 16-hour days of shooting. For trivia buffs, at the end of the video, Beck makes a cameo.



Audio Bullys: Shot You Down. If you're going to sample someone make it as kitsch as possible. And few things are more kitsch than Nancy Sinatra. The bastion of electronic music that it is, Audio Bullys are from England, natch. Simon Franks and Tom Dinsdale's *Shot You Down* reached number three on the U.K. charts in 2005. Sampling the Nancy Sinatra version of the song *Bang Bang (My Baby Shot Me Down)*, the song was also featured on the 2005 CBS iteration of the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show, headlined by Tyra Banks and Naomi Campbell. Swedish filmmaker Jonas Odell, one of the co-founders of FilmTecknarna, directed the mixed-media video.



In addition to commercials and music videos, Odell's title/I.D. work can be seen on Cartoon Network and MTV.

Talking Heads: And She Was. From the 1985 album *Little Creatures* (when they still released vinyl as well as CDs), Portland, Oregon-based filmmaker and media artist Jim Blashfield got the call to direct and animate the video. Blashfield has worked with Joni Mitchell, Paul Simon, Tears For Fears, Peter Gabriel and Michael Jackson among others. Blashfield has been much rewarded for his work over the years, winning a Cannes Golden Lion, a Grammy, an Emmy nomination and several MTV nominations and awards.

Röyksopp: Eple. Watch the first minute of this video and it's hard not to think of Austin Powers lowering the lights. Röyksopp is an electronic music duo (Torbjørn Brundtland and Svein Berge) headquartered in Bergen, Norway. They released their debut album *Melody A.M.* in 2002. The hypnotic video for *Eple* came about when London-based ad agency Mother and Oslo-based video graphics house Toxic went through the duo's old photo albums. Also of note, the song has been licensed by Apple Computer for use as the startup music to the company's upcoming Mac OS X Panther operating system. Now that's groovy.

His Name Is Alive: Are We Still Married? God knows what happened to the Brothers Quay when they were kids, but few people can evoke a mood (even if it's deeply depressed) in such a short time as these two guys. So for the somber track, they seemed a natural with their nightmarish use of stop motion and recurring images dredged from someone's psyche.

Björk: I Miss You. She's a lark Björk, whether or not you can take her music. And if you hate the pretension of the Oscars, few things can match her infamous 2001 Oscar appearance dressed as a swan singing the mournful and slightly avant garde *I've Seen It All*. A performance that had the Hollywood cognoscenti scratching their heads while they tried to find the beat. Part *Flintstones*, part early (and menacing) *Looney Tunes*, the *I Miss You* vid reminds you how genre-defying Björk's music is.



Chris Grove is a Los Angeles-based actor and journalist who knows a few things about music too. You can visit his website at <http://christophergrove.com/>

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CODER MAN

Direct to DVD - 66 min TV Series - 22 min x 26 episodes
Target Age Group - 7 to 14 years



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CHIPKALI WORLD is an animated series about the adventures of a family of house lizards (the Gupta family), known as chipkalis or geckos that coexist with the Sharmas (the two-legged kind) who live within the walls of a towering apartment complex in Mumbai, a large metropolis like Rio or Kuala Lumpur. The Guptas and the Sharmas share a love hate relationship. Their longstanding truce depends on one thing - the Guptas success at keeping the Sharma household free of bugs and other insects! Of course there are times of conflict which get sorted out.



Welcome to Funpur, the colourful play town, where Raju, the autorickshaw, his sister Reena and friend Ali, work and play! The autorickshaws have adventures that will take them and the audience on a frolicking ride. The rides are always fun but Raju is up to some mischief that often requires rescuing by their wiser friends including Singh, the big truck, Abdul, the taxi and Bobby, the loud school bus, a group that has special affection and respect for Tina, the sacred cow.



RAJU THE AUTORICKSHAW

Direct to DVD - 49 min TV Series - 7 min x 52 episodes
Target Age Group - Pre-school, 2 to 6 years



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20 Tips on Surviving the Toon Rollercoaster Ride

by Terry Thoren

The magazine you hold in your hands began life 20 years ago as ten photocopied pages written for the avid devotees of the *International Tournees of Animation* and the L.A. Animation Celebrations. Today it has evolved to become a true voice of the animation industry. I'm proud of the achievements of the magazine and the people who put it together.

As the original founder, editor and publisher of *Animation Magazine*, I have experienced all the changes the publication has encountered in the past two decades. Its growth and evolution, in many ways, have paralleled the changes in the animation industry. Today animation has become one of the key forces in the entertainment business. The next 20 years will see changes in this business that will be lead by artists working in all forms of animation. New companies will rise up and change our perception of what entertainment is. Companies come and go based upon their ability to stay in tune with the marketplace and stay in front of the creative curve. Here are 20 tips that I would give to any new company hoping to enjoy success in coming years:

1. Define your business. Decide what area of the business you are strongest at. What will be your core focus of production? Will you be a world-class production service company doing other people's work or a world-class intellectual property company producing your own work and building a library of characters? Or a combination of the two.

2. Identify your strengths. Remember that today's world-class animation companies are divided into three categories: feature film production, television production and the production of games. Very few excel at all three categories.

3. Know who the leading companies are. You must know the competition. Don't be afraid of the competition—they will pave the way for your

success. Hollywood is a business that is governed by followers: Leaders are hard to find.

4. You must invest in development. The foundation for success is built on strong ideas and talent. To succeed you must develop characters

that will stand the test of time.

5. Invest in ideas. The ideas you produce do not have to be your own. You can provide a cocoon for animation talent. When Pixar felt they were getting complacent they recruited Brad Bird to join their team. He made *The Incredibles*, won an Academy Award and pushed Pixar to a new level of excellence.

6. You need to attract great talent. Talented artists go where the great projects are. Develop or acquire a great project and the talent will follow.

7. Think outside the box. Don't allow analysis to freeze you into paralysis. Produce something that makes you stand out in the crowd.

8. You are building a brand. Your company is a brand. What you do brands you. Like it or not, what you produce will define you and this will become your brand.

9. Build a strong management team. Surround yourself with good people and let them do their job. Your line producers are the lifeline for your production.

10. Be passionate and set clearly defined goals. Do what you love and the passion will follow. Your team will only be as passionate as the people who are steering the ship. Then clearly define your company goals and share them with your team. Employees want to be included. Artists must be included.

11. Secure distribution. Well-conceived ideas that are in tune with the global marketplace will find distribution. Without distribution you will find it hard to survive.

12. Stay informed. You need to know who the buyers are and what they are buying. You must know the global business of animation. You need to know what sells and what doesn't sell.

13. Embrace marketing and publicity. Learn how to market your company so you stand out in the crowd. What sets you apart from everybody else? Why are you different?

14. Use Festivals and Markets for positioning. Position your company in the marketplace as special. The place to stand out in the crowd is at the big events—Annecy, The San Diego Comic-

Con, SIGGRAPH, MIP and MIPCOM.

15. Stay up to date. Build a strong web presence and a solid show reel. They will help you define how you are perceived and help you clarify what your company does.

16. Pay attention to the audience. Watch the numbers and know who is consuming animation? Research what audiences are buying.

17. Learn to think like a consumer. Watch animation on television with kids. Watch kids playing video games. Go to the DVD store and see what is moving off the shelves. Listen to what people say when they shop. Watch every ani-



Terry Thoren



mated movie that comes out on the opening weekend in prime time in a crowded theater.

18. The big money is in licensing and merchandise. Go to the toy store and see what is on the shelves. Keep your eyes open in the grocery store. Notice how many products include animated characters.

19. Invest in the solid concepts. The formula for successful animation concepts is strong story writing, memorable characters, quality voice casting, an iron-clad pre-production plan, cutting edge animation filmmaking, world-class music and sound effects and top-notch post-production.

20. Never stop planning. Prepare for the famine while you are in the feast. ■

Terry Thoren, the founder and original publisher of *Animation Magazine*, is currently the CEO and president of an entertainment company developing and producing high-quality animated feature films, TV series, webisodes, multi-platform projects and DVDs. Formerly, Thoren was CEO of Klasky Csupo for 11 years.



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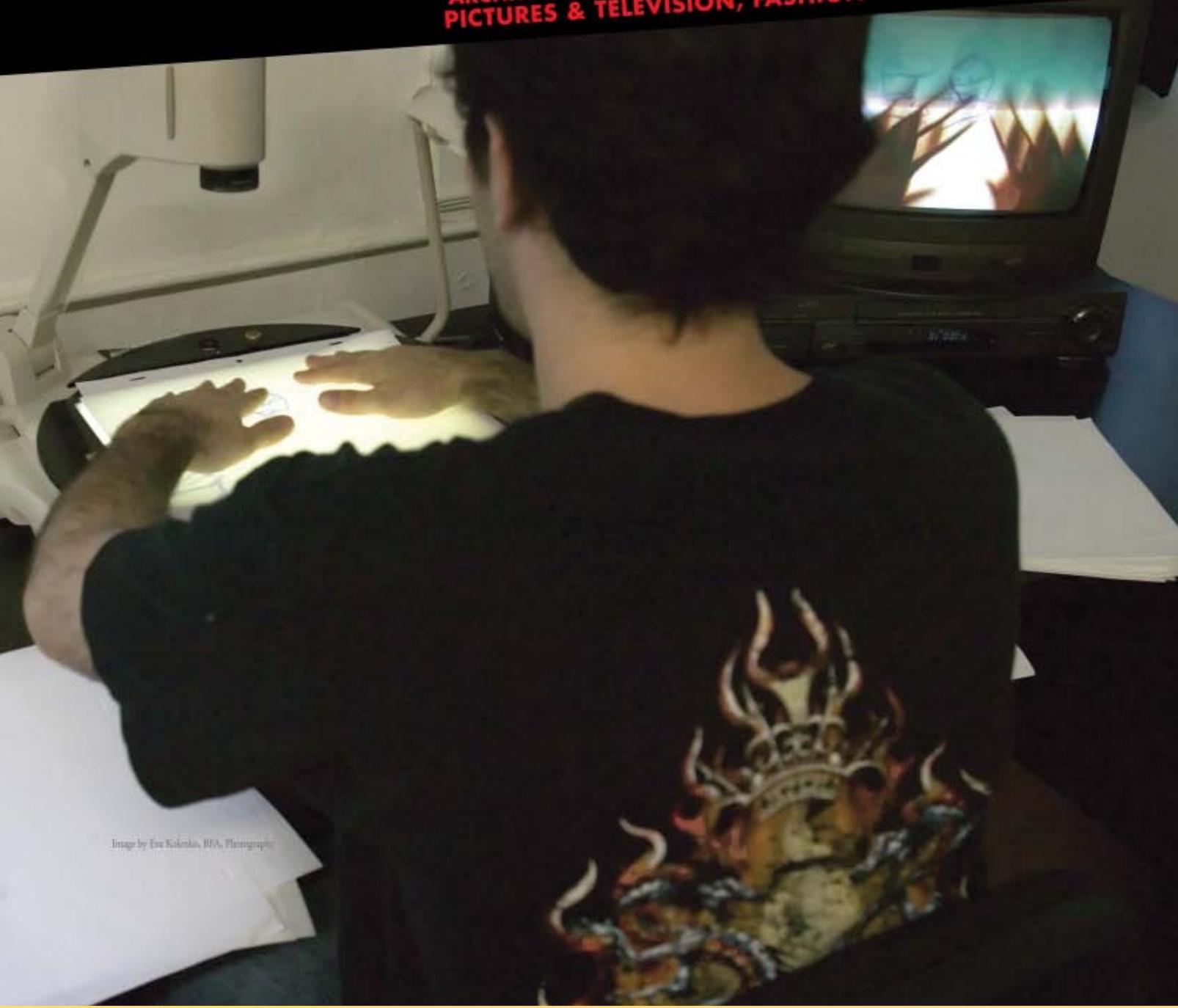


Image by Eva Kalenka, BFA, Photography

A Few Thoughts on Animation, this Magazine and the Meaning of It All!

 "Animation regularly pokes fun at itself and its egomaniacs who are piñatas in a room filled with basement dwellers starved of sugar with plastic light sabers ... fun, yup!"

Isabelle Babici
Program Assistant
Animation Arts Centre

"I might be naive, but I still think animation is among the most exciting types of creative film and video production to be involved with. I think with the blending of opportunities that CGI and traditional animation have to offer, it's a very interesting time for this nascent part of the industry."

Scott Essman
VISIONARY CINEMA

 "Twelve years ago, I directed a documentary on American animation's golden years. I needed an expert to interview some of the greats, like Chuck Jones and Friz Freleng. A young editor with *Animation Magazine*, Kourtney Kaye, stepped up and dazzled me. Thank you AniMag for bringing to me the most wonderful gift of all ... my cherished wife."

Thierry Rivard
Managing Director
Kayenta Production



"Animation is art, entertainment and my livelihood. *Animation Magazine* is a lifeline to the industry."

Marc Dole
CEO/Producer
Hatchling Studios



"Happy Birthday, I am celebrating my 35th year in animation. I have always believed in world domination through animation, I am not sure anyone would have known about it without the continuing coverage from *Animation Magazine*. You have helped to make animation a more important field, and for that I am thankful."

Michael Hirsh
CEO, Cookie Jar Entertainment Inc.



"Animation is the place to be for the next 20 years at least! Kids are global and do not care about where the programs come from as long as they can mirror in them. Should we be looking for a positive and fruitful example of globalization: animation is the one!" *Animation Magazine* is the only one of its kind at the crossroad of talents and business.

Definitely to be pursued for another 20 years!"

Christian Davin
CEO, Alphanim



"I knew I would dedicate my life to animation the first time I saw the International Tournee of Animation in 1978. It was a moment of epiphany."

Terry Thoren



"In the beginning, there was just bad coffee and me. Now there's a staff of 253. Went from eight hours a day to eight days a week, developing new animation techniques. Bought a new building, dropped 6 million bucks. The animation's never been better, but the coffee still sucks."

Adam Shaheen
President, Cuppa Coffee Studios



"2007 is Decode's 10th Anniversary. We have a lot to celebrate after going public. In 10 years we have produced 26 series, which adds up to 1,062 half hours of programming. Growing a business and working on great shows is wonderful, but what keeps me interested are the people I've met in the children's business over the years."

Neil Court
President, DECODE Enterprises Ltd.



"Congratulations, *Animation Magazine*, on your well-deserved 20th birthday. From BRB Internacional, we wish you many, many happy returns. You are a big part of us!" (Though, of course, you are so much younger!)

Carlos Biern
BRB Internacional



"I was a beautiful child—golden curls, Shirley Temple type. Then I became an animation producer, and it happened: The brain took over from the looks. Our latest animated movie is *The Ugly Duckling and Me*, the story of my life, in reverse."

Ralph Christians
Magma Films

continued on page 114

ANIMATION MAGAZINE INDUSTRY DIRECTORY

After 15 years of publishing the printed Animation Industry Directories, the online version is NOW available and, as always, our basic listings are FREE!

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Please take a few moments to log into our new ANIMATION MAGAZINE INDUSTRY DIRECTORY and choose a level of listing that meets your marketing needs.



www.animationmagazine.net/amid

Thoughts

continued from page 112



On his first job: "It was the first professional animation job that I did. I wrote, animated, cel painted, and shot it myself. It was a five-minute short about a family of genetically mutated rejects. I stayed up three nights in a row to finish it, with animation cels spread throughout my apartment, including the bathroom floor. I was at the premiere sitting in the audience sweating, my heart pounding, not really sure if I got the sound in sync, when the film started and the audience started to laugh the feeling that I got was euphoric. I woke up at the end of the screening knowing that this would be my life."

Genndy Tartakovsky
Orphanage Animation Studios



"John Lennon once said to me that if The Beatles had not happened, he probably would have been an assistant hairdresser to Cynthia (his first wife). Similarly, I would be running an arts and crafts business deep in the heart of rural Wales if 'SuperTed,' Welsh Television and Liz Young had not changed my life and enabled me to open my own animation studio."

Mike Young
Co-CEO Mike Young Productions



"Congratulations to all our friends at Animation Magazine - Oink Oink!"

Phil Davis, Mark Baker and Neville Astley of Astley Baker Davis Ltd. and all at the Peppa Pig Studio



"Animation is a truly international business - it's a fun, ingenious and sometimes completely crazy industry to be in. Colleagues are exceptionally nice, curious, entertaining and creative. It's amazing that sometimes the most unbelievable characters or crazy formats are the biggest success which make you rich—just remember the yellow sponge that lives in Bikini Bottom, in a pineapple and works in a crab burger diner!"

Susanne Schosser
Managing Director, EM. Entertainment GmbH



"I love Animation Magazine. It is required reading for every Cartoon Shelpper!"
Andy Heyward
Chairman & CEO, DIC Entertainment



"Animation imitates (my) life (Or what I learned from 20 years of makin' toons.) Believe in your ideas.... Have a plan..."

Open your thinking...
Enjoy the process....
Be grateful for retakes...
Embrace imperfection....
And ... If all else fails, blow it up!
We could be working in live action..."
Eric Rollman
EVP of TV/Animation, Marvel Studios



"Animation changed my life many years ago (at least 10) when I was asked by the executive producer of a brand new block of programs for teenagers to go and find some animation! Of course I hadn't a clue what he was talking about and was sent (keeping costs very low) on a package deal holiday to Nice to attend MIPCOM! Apart from the short film from Holland about nuns having sex—which by the way went down a storm—my love affair with animation began and, of course, will never end!"

So many congratulations to Animation Magazine—almost as old as me—and thanks over the years for supporting our industry with the same passion that we all have."

Joan Loftus
Contender Entertainment Group



"I feel so passionate about animation and I applaud Animation Magazine for supporting an industry that has meant so much to so many and will continue to have the same impact on new generations. For me personally, it's a life tonic and no one can express how it makes me feel everyday working in the business better than Peter Pan himself – 'Forget them, Wendy. Forget them all. Come with me where you'll never, never have to worry about grown up things again."

Michael Carrington
Creative Director, CBeebies BBC Children's



"Is animation ... a calling? You bet! Artistic fulfillment and runaway debt. Our studio's roots to the '80s we trace; Nomadic producers and transient work space. Now: *Help, I'm A Fish, Ugly Duckling and Me*, Asterix, series and ads for TV. CG, 2D, EU, USA: Persistence of vision—the A. Film way."

Hans Perk
A. Film L.A.



"Animation Magazine was the sponsor of the first event (WAC) we attended as Foothill Entertainment, Inc., so it will always have a warm spot in our hearts. It was also the first magazine we would turn to for up-to-the-minute news about the industry; well done Animation Magazine!!"
Gregory Paine and Jo Kavanagh-Paine, Foothill Entertainment

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Happy Birthday from all of us!



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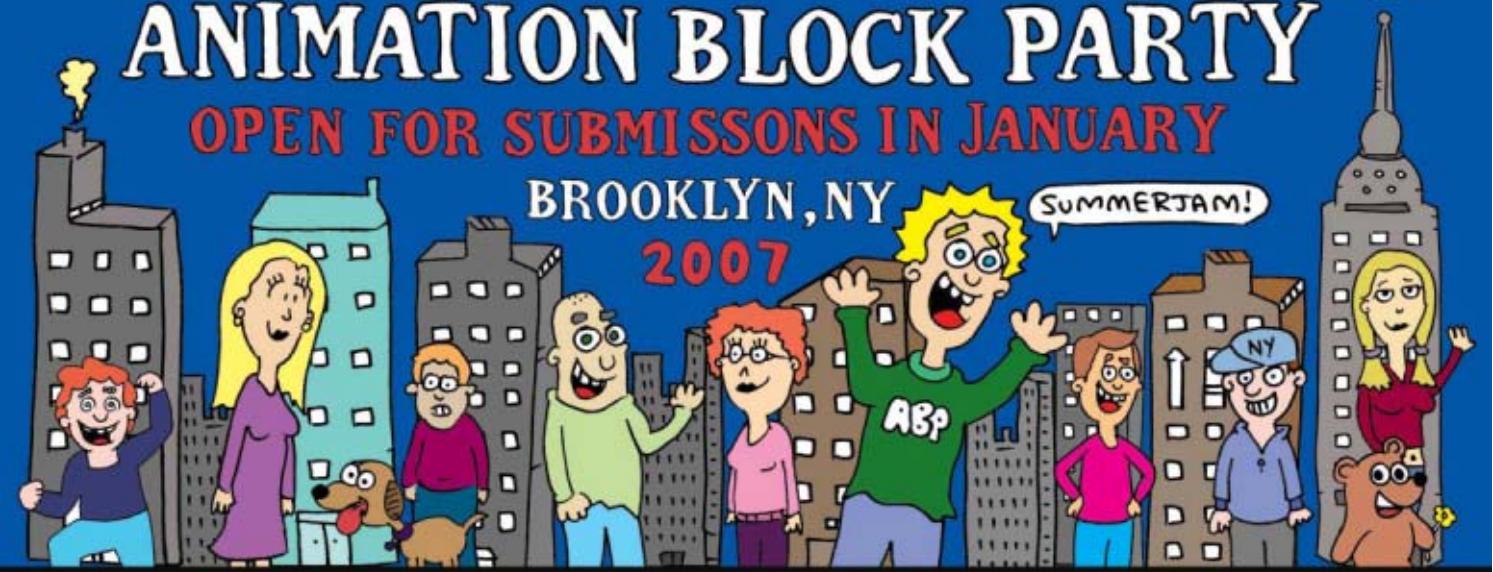
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Thoughts

continued from page 114



"In the Computer Animation Department here at Ringling School of Art and Design, we have a saying we like to use: 'I used to think that animator meant moving objects. Later, I learned that being an animator means moving an audience.' It serves as a reminder to us about what is truly important, and keeps us on track. Learn to do that, and you will have a highly successful animation career no matter where the future takes us."

Jim Campbell
Computer Animation Department Head
Ringling School of Art and Design



"Onscreen animation can make you laugh and cry; the business of animation is more extreme. You really have to believe in it to do it and it is great to have a magazine like *Animation* that genuinely supports the industry's efforts."

Jonathan Peel
Millimages UK Ltd.



"Animation has taught me that color, whimsy and joy are three facets of art that are so important to me that my life must always revolve around them.

Art CAN be unpretentious and delightful, and I hope that every great animator will laugh their way to the bank forever! *Animation Magazine* has validated this industry ... has provided a focal point for all contacts, and educated novices and old timers!"

Heidi Leigh
Director, Animazing Gallery



"Animation has been berry, berry good to me. I am thankful every day that I get to do what I love, surrounded by people I like, influencing and entertaining people I'll never know. Animation has given me the opportunity to travel to the four corners of the globe and make friends with talented and interesting people from all walks of life. *Animation Magazine* is the monthly (and now daily) pulse that we all put our fingers on to determine if our industry is dead, alive or still breathing. But mostly *Animation Magazine* is a great group of people who are dedicated to helping to preserve the spirit and integrity of our business and art form while having a good ol' time.

Happy Anniversary. Party on!"

Frank Saperstein
CEO/Executive Producer
Surprise Bag, Inc.



"Naïve, fearless and passionate about photography, dance and mathematics (I know... weird combination of passions) it was an ad for an animation camera man (yes man) that leapt off the pages of the local Toronto newspaper. I went for it and 30 years later am still thrilled I did....Nelvana, Disney and now HIT."

Lenora Hume,
EVP Programming & Production,
HIT Entertainment Limited



"I have read *Animation Magazine* from, I think, the very first issue. Over the years they have even printed things I've written and interviewed me on many occasions, which just goes to show how dubious their editorial policies actually are! Seriously, I have always been able to count on the magazine to publish insightful stories germane to our craft and its progress, not shying away from controversial issues either. Congratulations to *Animation Magazine* for your service to our industry, for sticking to your guns and for surviving this long in our whacky business."

Frank Gladstone
IDT Entertainment



"Telescreen is built around animation. We are internationally recognized for it. Animation is, like music, one of the few ways to easily communicate internationally, universal language so to speak. Animation produced by Telescreen over the past 23 years is finding audiences over and over again amongst every new generation. It has therefore proven to be for us a very appreciative way to produce content and something we are proud of. So in short: It gives us a good feeling, it is fun, others seem to enjoy it and thus in a nutshell: What more can one expect from life?"

Theo van der Schaaf & Sjoerd Raemakers
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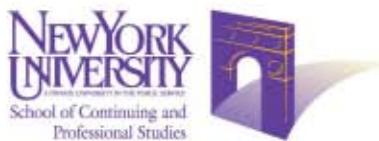
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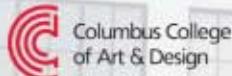
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Tech Reviews

by Todd
Sheridan
Perry



Autodesk's 3ds Max 9

When I heard that 3ds Max 9 was going to be the first release since Autodesk acquired Alias (and its flagship, Maya), I'd been wondering about how



the two programs would start to meld into one. I've already seen it in Maya, which took baby steps toward uniformity.

Most of the time, I take a cursory glance at a new release and if something doesn't scream "change" immediately, I'll have to pull up the hood and start poking around to find the new stuff. In the case of Max 9, even after some deep poking, I can't say there were enormous changes in the tool set. It almost feels like a point upgrade, if it were not for the fact that Max 9 is available in a 64-bit form as well as 32-bit. Therefore, if you happen to be using Windows 64 on a 64 bit processor, you will see pretty substantial speed increases simply based on the fact that the software and processor can handle larger chunks of data at one time, not to mention raising the RAM limit to 8GB. To really benefit from this

upgrade, you have to update your hardware as well. Nevertheless, let's take a look at the nice new tools that are common to both 64 and 32-bit programs.

In my mind, the most evident tool advance is the ProBoolean and ProCutter tools, which, like many new tools

recently, are an absorption of a tool written by a third party—in this case, PowerBooleans. A Boolean is the act of taking two objects and combining them in any number of math operations. You can add them together, subtract one

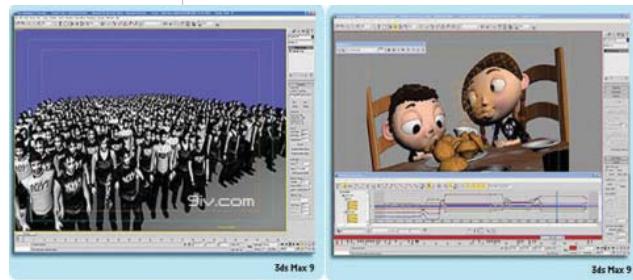
from the other, take the intersection of the two or remove where they intersect. It's a very fast method for modeling complex objects. However, traditionally, Booleans are very messy. They create ragged edges, or misshapen polygons. Generally, the result is an ugly mesh. And you can forget about any mesh-smoothing to create a denser mesh. The poor geo simply gets worse.

The new ProBoolean function has much smarter math involved in the operations. When the objects are combined, coplanar triangles are determined and incident edges removed. This leaves n-sided polygons which are a modeler's best friends. The result is a much more efficient mesh. The ProCutter tool is a

specialized Boolean that breaks apart an object on fissures determined by other "cutting" objects. Again, the operation is quite efficient, and therefore fast. Even though there are many benefits in these tools the best part, in my mind, is that they are exposed to Max-Script, which means that more tools can be customized around the new Booleans.

On the animation side, it's important to point out that layers have been added. These are similar to the functionality that Character Studio has where you can add layers of animation to make minor (or major) tweaks to a base animation. The function has been extended to all animatable parameters. Animators can make fine adjustments and go back into the curves and adjust how much influence each layer has on the overall animation. You really could do this in previous versions, to a degree, using list animation controllers. But the layer method is much more straightforward and easier to manage—much like the animation mixer in XSI or the Trax Editor in Maya.

Other advances include the ability to reference animation controllers, IK rigs, and systems, as well as not only the objects you wish, but any objects that might influence that object. The



influence objects can also be selected in the scene and during merger from other scenes. There are some substantial advances in the cloth and hair systems and grooming tools. Reactor

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Tech Reviews

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has been updated with more controls as well as common constraints to allow for objects to be held together until a force great enough splits them apart. The point cache tool has also been upgraded to use John Burnett's Point Cache 2 code (which is compatible to XSI through KPPointCache).

As I mentioned before, the largest jump in this version is moving from 32-bit to 64-bit. I like Max in general, and I like the workflow, but I'm not sure if I can say that 9 has absolute essentials that a production pipeline couldn't live without. So, unless you are upgrading your workstations to Windows 64 or Windows Vista, you can probably hold out for a point upgrade. However, if you do a lot of cloth and hair work, the grooming and tailoring tools alone make the new release worth having.

Website: www.autodesk.com/3dsmax

Price: \$3,495 (\$795 for upgrade from version 8; \$1,395 for upgrade from version 7)

2ds' Boujou 4

Boujou has been the Emmy-winning industry standard for camera and object tracking software for quite a few years now. But, like most software, it has had its drawbacks, which most of the ingenious tracking artists have found workaround for. In its latest incarnation, 2d3 has answered these problems by opening the back box and letting the users tinker around.

In years past, Boujou was used to track point data in the same way a soldier uses an automatic weapon. You simply fire and see what you hit. An artist would bring in the background

plate to be tracked, put in the lens data (if it existed), and hit Feature Track. Boujou would jaw on the frame for a while and try to come up with a solution. When it worked, it worked well, and when it didn't, it was easier to move to a manual solution—in a different piece of software. At least, that was my experience on numerous projects with numerous effects houses.

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nice tools that I didn't know what to do with myself. First off, there is a zoomed window which is centered around the tracker currently being edited. Within the window, you can make slight adjustments to the tracker while toggling between frames, allowing you to compare the track shape. Since the frame is locked to the tracker, you can detect subtle shifts in the shape being tracked. This feature is absolutely essential when you are trying to track very non-descript patterns, or patterns that have softened to a wash of color because of a rack focus in the shot. The lack of this feature in previous versions was unbearable.

Another aid in the tracking process is the ability to import 3D models into the track scene. So, if you have a model that represents something in the scene, you can eyeball the camera to match the mesh to the object in the plate. This gives Boujou a hint as to where the camera should be at that frame and it will refine the track accordingly. Obviously, the accuracy of this depends on the accuracy of the 3D model to the real object—so, best not to depend on the technique as a cure-all, but mainly as something to guide Boujou in the right direction. You can now also let Boujou create a 3D mesh from tracked points and locators to provide geometry for masks or shadow catching surfaces.

The tools are all about refining the initial solution to a point where you get an accurate solve for the camera. In the previous version, most of the time would be spent choosing points, and solving the entire scene to see if it worked—and then if it didn't, you had to choose more or other points and re-solve the entire scene. Now, most of the track artists' time can be spent in adjusting and refining so that Boujou can make improvements to the initial track.

Finally, the most important feature, as I say with all software, is the new scripting language that really lets you get under the hood and customize the program for your own needs.

Overall, I think Boujou is an impressive piece of software, and it has oper-

ated beautifully on numerous projects I've been a part of. It may still need a couple of features, like the ability to calibrate or refine a track of one camera using the view of another camera or using the track view to indicate the probability of a successful track based on the number of active trackers in frame. I also have an issue with its price point as \$10,000 may be fine for a mid- to large-sized vfx house, but its

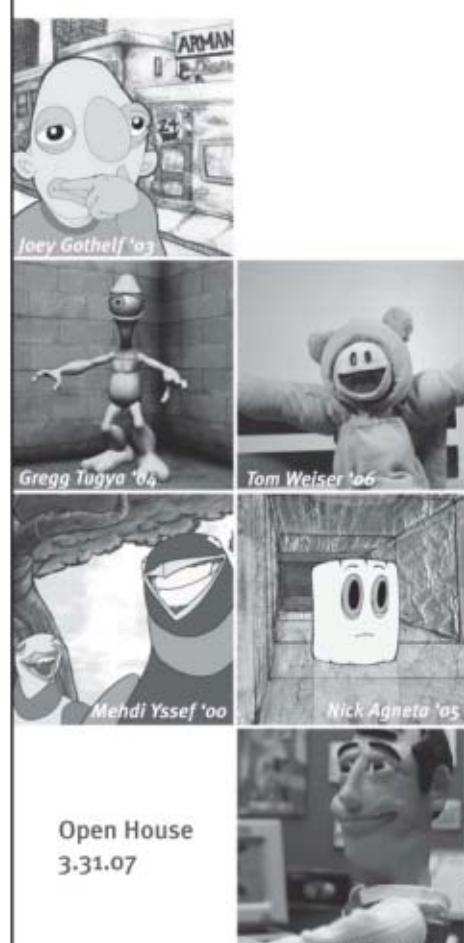
quite expensive for an individual by any definition.

Website: www.2d3.com/html/products/boujou4_overview.html

Price: \$10,000 (Network License Upgrade: \$1000 single payment per site; upgrade from Boujou 2 or 3: \$2,500) ■

Todd Sheridan Perry is the co-owner and vfx supervisor for Max Ink Cafe and Max Ink Productions. You can email him at ducky@maxinkcafe.com.

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Granting Full Access to the Next Level

Full Sail's new high-tech facility promises a taste of what awaits students in the real world. **by Ellen Wolff**

A new high-tech Computer Animation Center has added more digital glitter to Full Sail's campus near Orlando, Fla. It's still too new to have had a class of students spend their entire 21-month program there, so nobody knows the impact this facility will have on students' preparation for the world of work. But this facility was clearly designed to live up to the school's motto of offering a real world education, and indications of this await visitors the moment they walk through the doors.

"Plasma screens on the walls show animated sequences and advanced rendering techniques," says Erik Noteboom, executive director of education for Digital Arts. "There's also a Wall of Maquettes, as well as a Wall of Fame where we honor the accomplishments of graduates." Those grads include

people who've worked on films like the three most recent *Star Wars* episodes and *Pirates of the Caribbean* as well as videogames like *Medal of Honor* and *Grand Theft Auto*.

Noteboom says in addition to inspiring students, the Wall of Fame allows everyone to live vicariously through the graduates' success! He explains that the Center was designed to foster a sense of a computer animation *community*. Its hub is a large student hangout—with WiFi access, of course—surrounded by labs and art studios. He notes, "Between classes, lots of students congregate there, and you frequently hear: 'Hey, check this out!' The students there are either in the computer animation program or they're computer animation 'interested'; like game developers or film students who want to know about visual effects."

Noteboom, who oversees curricula for Game Development and Digital Arts as well as Computer Animation, says the Game Development people inspired the circular workstation structures in the new Center. "We had planned to build rows with everybody facing forward, so instructors could walk behind students," he notes. "That works great in programming courses but less well in artistic courses. When Game Development students began working in teams—because you need at least five people to even think about building a game—they discovered it was better to sit in a circle. That was our test case for the design of this new facility."

Noteboom and his team also consulted with animation industry people to learn how modern studios are being structured. "But we keep in mind that Full Sail is an educational environment, and if a student needs help, he or she can't be in some corner that an instructor can't see."

Another major change wrought by this new building is that it brings all the Computer Animation facilities—and its staff of 80 full-time teachers—under one roof. In years past, says Noteboom,

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Opportunities

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"We tended to group the computer animation labs together, but if students had to go to an art studio, that may have been in another building." This might not seem like a big deal to anyone who's attended day classes at a traditional college campus, but it's not trivial at Full Sail, which operates around-the-clock. As Noteboom remarks, "We have classes at one in the morning."

The school's immersive approach to teaching computer animation means that after the students graduate, they won't have a problem working long hours. It also means that classes are hands-on with software from day one. (They work primarily with Autodesk's Maya, Adobe's After Effects and Apple's Shake and Final Cut Pro.) "We don't inch them along, so they'll realize right away if this is for them or not," explains Noteboom.

Still, he admits it's tough to foster industry-ready collaborative skills, even in such a modern teaching environment. "You don't want to discourage someone who has a true vision, just as long as it's realistic. But if someone wants to animate dinosaurs riding space shuttles —do they have time to do that? Yet forcing everyone together on a project is also difficult. It's hard to get more than two characters in any one piece, given the amount of time, expertise and learning factors involved. If we get five people together and someone wants to model while another wants to animate, that's great. But there's always somebody staying up



more nights because they're rigging characters while another is building cars. To tell the truth, we struggle to find the right balance."

If nothing else, Full Sail's investment in its sophisticated new facility is yet

is laid out—with a room for a visual effects supervisor and a room for dailies. That's the next evolution." Fortunately for Full Sail, the school possesses the land on which to expand. "Next door to Computer Animation there's good

"Our next computer labs will be built the way a visual effects studio is laid out—with a room for a vfx supervisor and a room for dailies. That's the next evolution."

— Erik Noteboom, exec director of education for Full Sail's Digital Arts program

another sign of the explosive interest in computer animation.

And Noteboom is already planning for more. "Our next computer labs will be built the way a visual effects studio

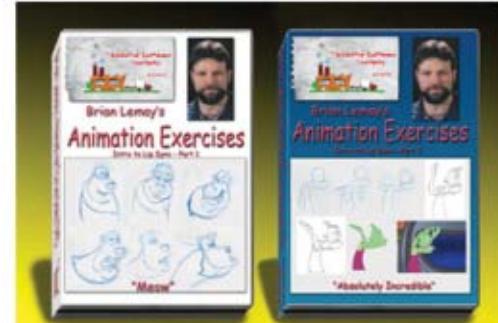
space to build. Ah, space—the final frontier!" ■

Ellen Wolff is a Los Angeles-based journalist who specializes in animation, visual effects and education.

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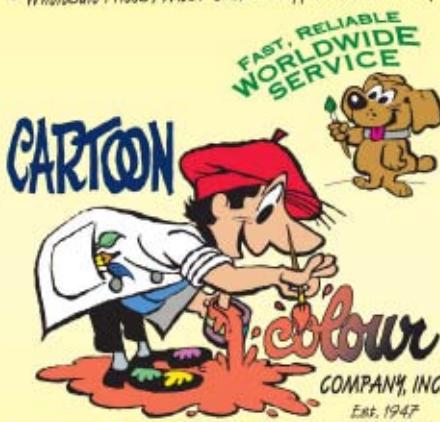
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British Int'l Toy and Hobby Fair	Jan. 5-14	London, U.K.	www.britishtoyfair.co.uk
Future Film Festival-New Animation Cinema Technologies	Jan. 7-10	Bologna, Italy	www.futurefilmfestival.org
TGSNT - The Greatest Story Never Told Flash Storytelling Competition	Jan. 8-11	online	www.tgsnt.com
KidFilm Festival	Jan. 8-12	Dallas, TX	www.usafilmfestival.com
NATPE 2007	Jan. 8-21	Las Vegas, NV	www.natpe.org
Transmediale - Int'l Media Art Festival Berlin	Jan. 12-14	Berlin, Germany	www.transmediale.de
Macworld Conference and Expo	Jan. 15	San Francisco, CA	www.macworldexpo.com
Imagina	Jan. 15-18	Monaco	www.imagina.mc
RealScreen Summit	Jan. 15-18	Washington, DC	www.realscreensummit.com
Int'l CES	Jan. 17-21	Las Vegas, NV	www.cesweb.org
Future TV Show North America	Jan. 18-21	New York, NY	www.futuretvna.com
Goteborg Int'l Film Festival	Jan. 18-21	Göteborg, Sweden	www.filmfestival.org/filmfestival
Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival	Jan. 18-27	Clermont-Ferrand, France	www.clermont-filmfest.com
Santa Barbara Int'l Film Festival	Jan. 18-28	Santa Barbara, CA	www.sbfilmfestival.org
Digital Hollywood at 2005 CES Consumer Electronics Show	Jan. 24-27	Las Vegas, NV	www.digitalhollywood.com
Sundance Film Festival	Jan. 26- Feb. 3	Park City, UT	www.sundance.org
Slamdance Film Festival	Jan. 26-Feb. 5	Park City UT	www.slamdance.com
Stuttgart Filmwinter Festival	Jan. 29-31	Stuttgart, Germany	www.filmwinter.de
NATPE Mobile + +	Jan. 31-Feb. 4	Las Vegas, NV	www.natpe.org/conference/register

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The past 20 years have been very kind to the hardworking and slightly disturbed staff of *Animation Magazine* and their alter egos. All of us here at Animag wish our faithful readers and the brilliant folks who work in the animation and vfx worlds a fantastic holiday season and a great new year! Thanks for keeping us off the streets and out of trouble.

ERIC BRANDENBERG

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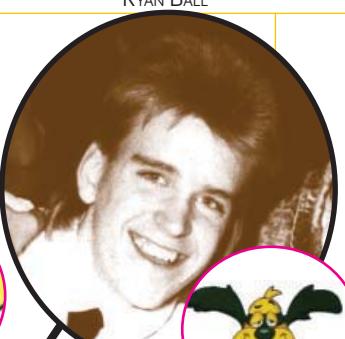
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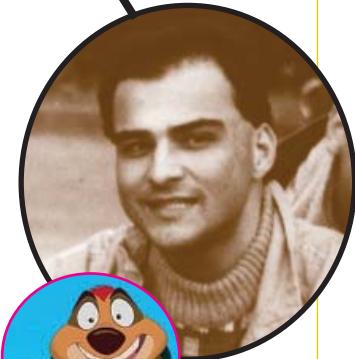
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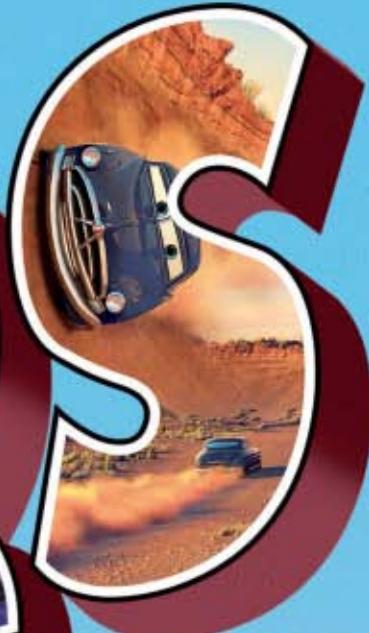
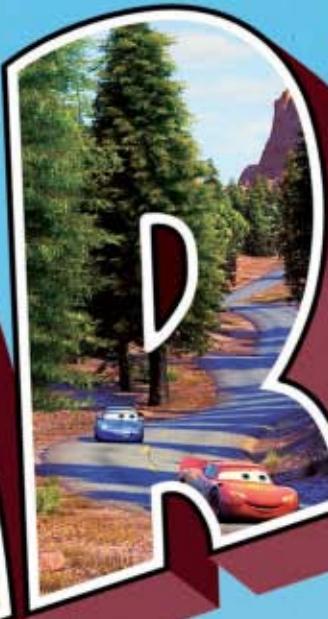
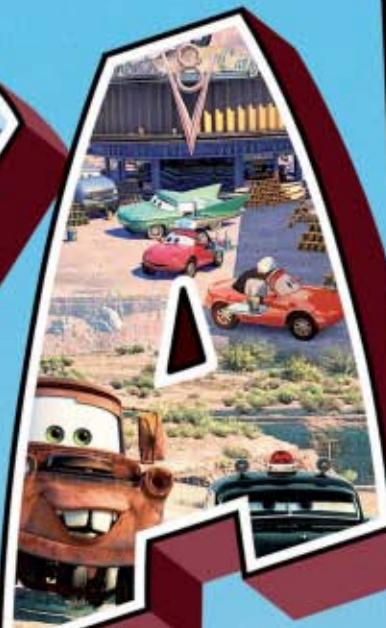
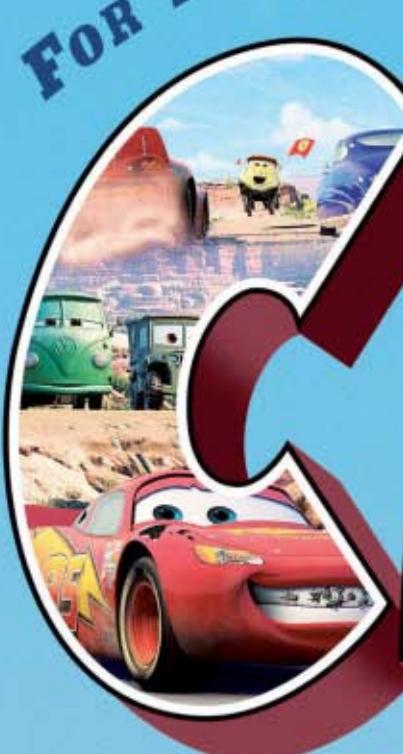
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